

BR

530

B95

CORNELL
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY



679

. 58

PAGES

FROM THE

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY

OF

NEW ENGLAND.



Cornell University
Library

The original of this book is in
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in
the United States on the use of the text.

PAGES

FROM THE

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY

OF

NEW ENGLAND,

DURING THE CENTURY BETWEEN

1740 AND 1840.

By

Rev. George Burgess, D.D.,

Bishop of the Diocese of Maine.

BOSTON:

JAMES B. DOW, PUBLISHER.

1847.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THESE PAGES originally appeared in the Episcopal Observer. They were copied into other periodicals; and their republication in the present form, has been requested. The design with which they were written, was to present a historical review, rather than a history. Such a review must contain facts, may imply opinions, and cannot but involve inferences. The facts which are contained in these Pages are either generally familiar, or else preserved in printed documents,—numerous,—though often ephemeral. The opinions which are implied, relate to subjects on which no Christian can desire disguise. The inferences which are involved, are as much with the reader, as with the writer.

P A G E S , & C .



CHAPTER I.

THE REFORMATION tore down images and shrines within the temple of Christian doctrine ; but it left the foundations, the walls and the columns as they had stood through the revolutions of ages. Still was the structure cruciform ; a triune glory was still reflected in its parts ; and the holiest spot was that at which were still celebrated the mysteries that commemorated the one atoning Sacrifice. The rash man who dared, in the revival of primitive instructions, to find and follow the footsteps of Pelagius, of Arius, or of Paul of Samosata, was not safer on the southern bank of the Tweed than on the northern, and might as vainly seek a shelter among the republicans of Geneva, as at the courts of electors or emperors. Amidst the wide effervescence of thought, a few scattered minds, each in its own manner, assailed the common faith of the reformed, and the penalty was exacted. The five or six sufferers under Edward, Elizabeth and James, had blended with something like the Arian opinion, fantasies which would have effectually prevented its propagation through their single-handed labors. Servetus, an itinerant Spanish

physician, if he bore not about the insane wreck of a fine intellect, must have been at least a Pantheist. Gathered from several countries, a company of exiles established themselves in Poland and Transylvania; and the Socini left them a name. Persecution disturbed their flourishing seats in Poland; and some tens of thousands of Transylvanians were the only body on the European continent, that preserved an ecclesiastical organization and denied the Trinity.

"The father of English Unitarianism," in the language of a distinguished Unitarian, was John Biddle, who was rejected from the wide toleration of Cromwell, and after the Restoration died in the prison which had become his home. His spirit revived in Thomas Emlyn, a dissenting minister, who, towards the end of that century, published his *Humble Inquiry into the Scripture Account of Jesus Christ*, and was sentenced to an ignominious punishment at Dublin. Biddle, however, was a Socinian; while Emlyn seemed to ascribe to the Saviour the throne which Arius had allowed, above angels and archangels. The bold and peculiar mind of Milton had chosen a path of its own, and, giving to the Son of God every honor except that of eternal generation and consubstantial equality with the Father, adored and accepted the vicarious propitiation. A cool, cautious and negative strain of thought drew upon Locke the reproach, as it was deemed by himself, of Socinianism; but the claim of those who have loved to number him with Newton, amongst their more secret precursors, is compelled, as with Newton, to

seek its sanctions from his silence or his less unequivocal language. The great Dr. Clarke paused where his conscience would still permit the worship of the English church; while Whiston, earnest, eccentric, learned, intrepid, threw himself back upon what he deemed an Arianism earlier than Arius.

Freedom from ecclesiastical restraint was the inheritance of the children of nonconformists. While civil liberty was attaining its full stature under the house of Brunswick, a spirit of unawed investigation asserted its rights in the domain of religious knowledge. Early in the reign of George the First, two or three of the most eminent dissenting ministers in Devonshire were charged with the Arian error. The defection proved more extensive:—a stormy tumult agitated the whole body of nonconformists; the offending teachers were at length expelled from their meeting-houses; and the general assembly at Salters' Hall condemned their doctrine. But the effect of the decision was counterbalanced by the refusal of a large, a respectable and generally an orthodox portion of that assembly, to throw their own belief into any form of words which had not been copied from the Scriptures. It became settled in many minds, as a part of the freedom of dissent, that no other creed should raise its battlement against heresy, above the rampart of the Bible; and the popular attachment to the religious liberty which had been so late and so hardly won, and the popular prejudice against bigotry, a prejudice so peculiarly popular

in times of spreading intelligence, were allured to the side of innovation. The cause of freedom itself was naturally associated with the cause which claimed protection from the ægis of that freedom.

In the mean time, the human mind, pushing its inquiries in all directions, had approached and entered the metaphysics of religion. The disclosure of ancient errors in natural science, as well as of the falsehoods of the papacy, had cherished a rising habit of doubt, till incredulity was deemed a token of superior wisdom. A depraved heart and an evil life had also made a class of unbelievers, distinct from the speculative doubters of that day; and the writings of these, though refuted and rejected, and sometimes suppressed, and sometimes only suggesting what it was unsafe to say, yet by their very existence confirmed the spirit of doubt where they did not create the spirit of denial. Theologians felt the influence, or yielded without consciousness. It was as if a mist had silently overspread the landscape; and neither tree nor hill, neither the house of God below, nor the bright heaven above, was seen clearly. Not a land nor a church in Western Europe was exempt from that peculiar atmosphere, in which all forms of speculation glided into incredulity, as all morbid conditions of the body sometimes glide into the prevailing pestilence. In Holland, the critical skepticism of Bayle was attended by the skeptical criticism of Le Clerc. France had banished the Huguenot leaven by which she might have been half preserved; and within the very bosom of the national

church, doubt paused at no middle triumph, but subjecting priests, nobles and philosophers to the genius of Voltaire, ripened into all unbelief, till "blood came out at the wine-press, even unto the horse-bridles." The intellectual life of the Spanish peninsula was insufficient to disclose to the world the growth of that infidelity in its churches and cloisters, amidst which Blanco White long afterwards nourished his indignation and his discontent. Even at Rome, it might have seemed that the old foundations were broken, when Ganganelli put on the tiara ; a better man, it may be, and a purer Christian than his later predecessors, yet surely not elected for the firmness of his faith in the system which made the Roman See a papacy. Voltaire and Rousseau exulted contemptuously in the assertion of a silent Socinianism at Geneva. The theologians of Germany stood for a while, offering the passive and motionless resistance of a dike to the slightest onset of doubt ; but when they yielded, it was as the failing dike throws open meadows and villages and broad plains to the rush of the torrent. In the Scottish and English establishments the operation was a doctrinal lethargy, preserving, in the former, the staid sobriety of the ancestral manners, and investing itself, in the latter, with the robes of courtly dignity, or passing into the mass of city and country worldliness.

Amidst such an atmosphere, so widely spread, the instructions of the English nonconformists grew more and more indistinct. The spirit of the age forbade too cordial a belief in any thing which

the senses could not discern, and which natural reason had failed to discover; and the passion for religious freedom insisted that the teachers should be protected against the assaults of the inquisitive. It was made but a question of individual opinion and taste, whether one doctrine more or less should be announced from the pulpit, or whether it should echo only the inculcation of a virtuous practice. Minister after minister became a literary writer, a critic, an antiquary, an essayist, a chemist, an encyclopædist, a political economist, a controversialist; any thing rather than a herald, whose clear trumpet might sound out the old gospel of the Puritans. Congregation after congregation faded away, though instructed by the learning of Lardner, the eloquence of Foster, the diligence of Benson, or the varied information of Kippis. This could not be, however, without resistance; the stricter and the more indistinct drew off into separate companies; and probably the accidental preponderance of numbers or of refinement, rather than any peculiarity of discipline, brought most of the modern liberality into the Presbyterian body, and most of the ancient zeal into the Independent.

The founders of the chief colonies of New England were of one heart and one mind; and this was the source of a great error in their ecclesiastical system. It forgot that never again could the community which they founded, be what it was at first; that they had collected and brought into the wilderness a peculiar people, but must afterwards meet human nature as it arose, in all its varieties.

They could exclude from their communion or banish from their territory the man who would not share their faith ; but they could not decide the character nor annul the birthright of the children who should succeed to their own places. The apostolic conception of a church as an assembly of believers, received, on the profession of their faith, to the sacraments, and to the fellowship of the saints, and seeking there the grace by which they might be trained for heaven, and subject to exclusion on the proof of wilful and persevering sin, till they should furnish the fruits of penitence, was not at all obscure or difficult. It was no objection that it might be compared with the net of a fisherman, which gathers up all alike, or with a field in which tares are nightly sown by an enemy. The settlers of New England, however, had learned to dread chiefly the ills of a church which was identical with a nation ; and it was their endeavor so to fence round their own, that, as far as might be, it should embrace none but spiritual, accepted followers of the Captain of salvation. That the children of such should accompany their parents to the baptismal waters, they gladly granted ; but since the children might forsake the footsteps of the parents, it was necessary to the idea of a pure church to deem baptism only an entrance to an outer porch, while the Lord's Supper, or the previous assumption of the covenant, admitted to the church itself, the inner sanctuary. But each succeeding generation felt the evil ; and each, in its own manner, attempted its removal. It was dis-

tinently at war with the practice of the apostles ; it claimed for the Puritan churches a character which the primitive churches never possessed ; it pushed the hereditary principle in baptism to a height unknown to a religion that has no respect of persons ; it discouraged many honest and devout hearts, by requiring the certainty of perseverance before it offered a welcome to the holy table ; it made the delay of a religious profession a matter of prudence, of modesty, almost of duty ; it lessened the value of the sacraments and of all Christian communion ; it threw a mantle of personal sanctity over those who had already passed the barrier ; and it sanctioned a practical falsehood, since, after all, no man believed that many who were within were indeed purer than many who were without. The " Halfway Covenant," first adopted in 1662, was the earliest effort against this system, giving to parents who were not communicants, the privilege of baptism for their children, and of a solemn acknowledgment of Christian truth for themselves. But while it widened the circle of the baptized, its natural effect was to strengthen the hesitation of the undecided, and to lessen the company of communicants. By the next effort, the communion table was thrown open ; but the excellent Stoddard of Northampton, and his associates in the defence of this principle, were embarrassed by their Calvinism. It compelled them to acknowledge that every communicant, at the period of his admission, was either distinctly renewed in spirit, and therefore sure to persevere, or else as distinctly unre-

newed, and therefore quite destitute of the inward affections without which the sacrament must be a vain, if not a profane observance. The feeblest faith might be nourished by such an ordinance; but its administration, where not even the feeblest faith was supposed or hoped, could not but be, to many an earnest mind, a painful and repulsive practice. It is not strange that Edwards, the grandson and successor of Stoddard, renounced such a discipline; but it is strange that he was not shaken, either in his own doctrine of perseverance, or in its application. In the European communions, that doctrine, like that of predestination, with which it was linked, had no voice, except for the encouragement of the weak, and the comfort of the desponding. But when, in the conversation of every day, the propositions were placed side by side, that none but the regenerate ought to be members of a Christian communion, that regeneration was a spiritual change of which he who had received it could hardly fail to be clearly conscious, and that the regenerate could never lose the prize; many must have advanced with presumption, many must have withdrawn with timidity and regret; many must have willingly seen themselves left to their own indifference, unfit by their own acknowledgment; and many others must have looked with peculiar suspicion towards the small number who seemed, as they imagined, to profess not so much their humble hope, as their established holiness. Neither principle, however had quite prevailed; and when Whitefield first passed like a cloud over New Eng-

land, with thunder and lightning and rain, there was already, a stricter and a gentler party. One was easily open to fanaticism; the other was far too much inclined to erase the stronger lines that enclose the camp of salvation. There was not much communication with the theologians of the mother land; and Arianism had only been named as a distant heresy.

CHAPTER II.

It was on a September evening in 1740, that Whitefield, a young Presbyterian of the Church of England, arrived at Boston. The "Great Awakening," which began six years before at Northampton, under the ministry of Edwards, had spread through some neighboring regions of Massachusetts and Connecticut, and for the time had died away. Whitefield, whose fame had gone before him while he traversed the colonies, was met, several miles from the town, by a company of gentlemen, with one or two ministers; and for ten days he preached to such congregations as had never before been assembled in America. There were in Boston eleven places of worship of the established order. Foxcroft and Chauncey were

the ministers of the first church; the elder, an Episcopalian by education, but ardent in his love of the Puritan doctrines, and the most attractive preacher of his time, till an early paralysis somewhat shook his powers; the younger, less pleasing in the pulpit, but a cool, bold and vigorous thinker. The pastor of the Second, or Old North Church, was Joshua Gee, a man of superior talents, but uniting doctrinal zeal with constitutional indolence. Over the Old South Church were Sewall, whom Unitarianism has described as the greatest bigot of the time, and Prince, the pious chronologist. The Brattle Street Church had been organized apart from the Cambridge platform, under a plan which gave to the whole people the election of their minister, and for some time it was excluded from the general fellowship; but it had long prospered, and was prospering still under the learned Colman, its earliest pastor, now the oldest of the clergy of Boston, and under his ardent colleague, William Cooper. Webb was the minister of the New North Church; Checkly, of the New South in Summer street; Samuel Mather, the son of Cotton Mather, of a congregation which separated with him from the New North Church, and worshipped in the building which was called the New Brick Meeting-house; Moorhead of the congregation in Federal street, which was founded by Irish Protestants, and was Presbyterian in its constitution; Mather Byles, of the church in Hollis street; Welstead, of that in Middle street; and Hooper, a Scotchman, who afterwards received Episcopal

orders, of the West Church, which had been but three or four years in existence. Within all these churches rang the clear music of that youthful voice which every where so bowed the hearts of men ; and when, on the return of Whitefield from the Eastern coast, he preached his farewell sermon on the Common, he supposed, somewhat extravagantly indeed, that he had thirty thousand hearers.

After a few months, Whitefield was followed by the bold and unsparing Gilbert Tennent. There was a wide and almost tumultuous swell of religious emotion ; angels rejoiced in heaven, and good men on earth, over many a repentant sinner ; the stranger saw a new seriousness on the face of villages and towns ; and pastors acknowledged with a gush of gratitude, that a single season had yielded them a richer harvest than a lifetime before. But the youth of Whitefield and the harshness of Tennent had disowned the prevailing reverence for authorities, and both of them had intimated with distinctness and with great uncharitableness, their opinion of the spiritual estate of many of the clergy. The college at Cambridge was pronounced by Whitefield to be, "as far as he could gather, not far superior to the English Universities in piety and true godliness." "They told me," says Wheelock, then a warm itinerant, recording in his journal the effect of a sermon of his own at Boston, — "they told me they believed that Mather Byles was never so lashed in his life." The tide of censorious enthusiasm rose higher and higher ; and on its topmost wave came Davenport of Long Island,

who was not afraid to pronounce publicly the names of the unconverted ministers. A declaration prepared by all the Congregational clergy of Boston refused him their pulpits; the law laid its hand upon him; the ministers interceded; and he was acquitted as insane, and published afterwards a recantation of his extravagance.

The appearance of Davenport in Boston was in 1742; and as he was but the foremost of a considerable body who were scattered through the provinces, the pastors of Massachusetts, when they met in their general Convention in 1743, after a very careful, faithful and judicious sermon from Appleton of Cambridge, appointed a committee of inquiry. On their report, a "testimony" was adopted, against the doctrinal errors of relying on secret impulses without the word, of affirming that there can be no conversion without a knowledge of the time, or without assurance, of denying that sanctification is an evidence of justification, with other Antinomian and Familistical opinions; and against the disorders in practice, of itinerancy without the assent of the settled pastors, of assuming the sacred office without knowledge or a call, of ordination without a charge, of separation, of pronouncing judgment on the spiritual state of others, as if the heart could be seen, and of tumultuous and indecent confusion in religious assemblies. At the same time they testified also against the impiety of reproaching the work of the Spirit in the souls of Christians. A majority of thirty-eight upheld this testimony, while others would have

concurred in guarding the people against the delusions which might be easy at such a season as had lately been witnessed, but would gladly have added a distinct testimony to the revival of religion in the provinces. Another convention was summoned by this minority; and on the day after the commencement, ninety ministers were present, all of whom were substantially united in judgment. The "testimony" which they signed, received also the consent of thirty who were absent; but about thirty of the whole number of signatures were those of clergymen in New Hampshire, Maine, Rhode Island and Connecticut. It was cautious and discriminating, but decided and solemn, and embraced a warning against being drawn into Arminianism, as well as Antinomianism, through fear of the opposite errors. There were at that time about a hundred and seventy-five congregations in Massachusetts; so that at least half of the clergy were thus arrayed as friends of the more ardent efforts and appeals which had been so widely fruitful.

First among the opponents of the excitement, Chauncy had published an account of the French Prophets, which was republished in Scotland, and obtained for him a Scottish doctorate; and when the "Thoughts on the Revival," by Edwards, appeared in 1742, they were followed in 1743, by Chauncy's "Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England." While Edwards acknowledged the evils, but insisted that they ought not to obscure the proofs of a mighty and infinite

blessing, his adversary contended that they had held a most unhappy preponderance in the whole commotion. Turell, of Medford, published in its defence a dialogue on the times, with directions to his people; which, notwithstanding, were bitterly assailed by Andrew Croswell, the enthusiastic champion of Davenport and of excess. A sermon on charity, which was preached by Ashley, of Deerfield, in the Brattle street pulpit, and afterwards printed, compelled Cooper to remonstrate through the press against being supposed to have changed the views with which he had signed the second testimony. The opinions of Chauncy and Ashley were sustained by Hancock, of Braintree; Prescott, of Salem; Pickering, of Ipswich; Balch, of Bradford; Tucker, of Newbury; Barnard, of Haverhill; and others of the Essex ministers who were known as Arminians.

In the Autumn of 1744, Whitefield a second time visited New England and Boston, a somewhat older and wiser man; but he was now encountered by a wide prejudice, which the remoter issues of his first visit, not yet disclaimed by himself, had not unjustly nourished. Although at the request of Colman, he administered the sacrament, a letter from two neighboring associations of ministers to the associated ministers of Boston and Charlestown, remonstrated against his admission to the pulpits of Massachusetts, avowing the belief that his former journey had resulted in less of good than of evil. Another entire association, at the request of Appleton of Cambridge for their counsel,

offered the same opinion. The whole faculty of Cambridge prepared a public testimony against his enthusiasm, uncharitableness, extempore preaching, itinerancy, and mismanagement in the affairs of the Orphan House, in Georgia; Yale College added a similar declaration; a vehement letter, of the same character, was issued by Henchman of Lynn; and testimonies followed from associations in Norfolk, Plymouth, Middlesex, Worcester, and Bristol. Several of these divines, such as Appleton, Sewall, Cotton, Eells, the elder Walter, Perkins, Allen, and President Holyoke, had given their aid or their testimony to the revival; but many of them had regarded it from the beginning with suspicion and alarm.

Whitefield replied to Chauncy and to the faculty of Cambridge, in the language of respect and candor; acknowledged some of his early mistakes; but gave little satisfaction. He was upheld at Boston by Prince, Webb, Foxcroft, and Gee; and when he was there again in 1745, the commanders and soldiers who conquered Louisburg, drank from his eloquence a more religious energy than that which usually attends an army to its campaigns. In the mean time, the several sermons before the Convention of ministers, very precious documents for him who would note the progress of theological opinion, directed their shafts against the exhorters and the separatists. Such was the discourse, in 1742, of Loring, of Sudbury, a divine warmly attached to the doctrine of justification by faith alone. So Chauncy, in 1744, chose for his theme the con-

tempt into which the ministry must not permit themselves to fall, and pointed to the rigorous exercise of discipline as the remedy for the ills of the times. In the following year, Clark, of Salem, a decided Calvinist, yet more directly urged this hazardous counsel. The friends of the revival, however, met in Boston, in the autumn of 1745, and issued yet another testimony. While they magnified the display of the doctrines of the gospel during the revival, and lamented the profaneness which had flowed from the opposition, they spoke distinctly of an awful danger that the doctrine of the agency of the Holy Spirit might be banished, first from the pulpits and then from the land; and they called on all ministers, whatever might have been their judgement of the revival, to unite for the defence and promotion of the truth against all errors, "in particular the Socinian, Antinomian, and Arminian." The Convention sermon of 1746 was preached by Gay, of Hingham, on the dove-like character which is enjoined on Christian ministers. But the tendencies of the day broke forth in a controversy on Arminianism, between Balch, of Bradford, on one side, and Wigglesworth, of Ipswich, and Chipman of Beverly, on the other.

When the sounds of the revival were now echoing more faintly and passing away, the clergy of New England might probably be arranged under four classes, in their relation to that extensive tempest of feeling. A considerable body esteemed it a divine interposition throughout; and while they would not justify disorder, yet pointed to fifty

thousand new communicants, and honored Whitefield with an unalloyed reverence. A smaller company adhered to the revival, but deplored and condemned the career of Whitefield, when they saw the unhappy errors with which the revival had been blended. More numerous was that class, embracing probably half of the ministers of Massachusetts, and almost all in Connecticut, who could not speak without hesitation, of the march of events, nor desire its renewal, while yet they believed and preached the doctrines of their fathers, and implored the special grace of the Holy Ghost, for every success in their labors, and every blessing on their own spirits. There remained a few, who were cold at heart towards some portions of the common creed ; were secretly, and perhaps unconsciously, willing to exchange it for a form of doctrine which Arminius would not have recognized as his own ; and were less anxious for any doctrine than for their own intellectual freedom. It was no slight calamity, that during the remainder of that century, these parties and all others as they arose, were ever verging towards a simpler division, until two only survived ; two, directly and irreconcilably hostile, and hostile only.

CHAPTER III.

EDWARDS led the way at Northampton, in asserting with strictness the principle that evidence of piety, beyond a profession of the faith, and a wish to observe the commandment, should be offered before any should be received to the table of communion. An open strife ensued; and the middle ground could be occupied by neither party, because it would have seemed at variance with the doctrine of necessary perseverance, sustained by both, and also with the metaphysical theory of conversion, adopted by Edwards. That middle ground would have been, to suppose that where a deep and earnest wish to seek the grace of God in his appointed paths is united with the belief of the gospel, the grace which is sought is already present; and that when the wish ceases, or ceases to be deep and earnest, the branch has lost its inward union with the vine, and should either renew it or no longer attempt to preserve its outward symbol. On one side of this ground, the system of Williams of Lebanon, who was the opponent of Edwards, seemed, though he repelled the interpretation, to admit that those who knew themselves to be unmoved by heavenly grace might safely sit down at the holy table. On the other side, Edwards demanded, before perseverance, the proof which perseverance alone could furnish; and, since

all perceived that many who had laid their hands upon the plough had turned back from the field, it became needful, either to practise a long, unauthorized and perilous delay, or to hazard an extensive and singularly dreadful hypocrisy, or to brave the just odium that could not be shunned by a tribunal which assumed the office of searching the hearts, and of answering to men for their own salvation. In the progress of the controversy, Edwards was compelled to withdraw from his parish at Northampton; but his eminent name became a rallying standard; and men grew more than ever accustomed to associate any other "doctrine of the will" except his own with the most perilous heresies. He left his strong grasp deeply imprinted on the divinity and the religion of New England; which have owed much to the depth of his character and the firmness of his conscience, but little to the austerity of his temper, and to that alliance which he founded between devout feeling and metaphysics.

There had been much that commanded respect in the frank, direct, and courageous opposition of Chauncy. While many had wavered, and many had shrunk, for a time, from declaring the suspicion which they felt, he stood up though alone amongst the clergy of the capital, and resisted the whole flood of innovation. He was no orator; he wrote without elegance; he seems to have had little imagination, and little warmth of feeling, except that which speaks in the sharp, angry reply; but he employed vigorous argument with masculine

ability; assailing, in the same temper, episcopacy, the revival and the doctrines of Sandeman. To him, however, among all the eminent divines of New England, belongs the unhappy pre-eminence of having been the first to take the spirit of doubt to his bosom. He was said to question the consciousness of the soul between death and the resurrection; he wrote in his latter days against the eternity of retribution; and he nourished that sarcastic hostility to the sentiments of past ages and the determinations of venerable bodies on doctrine, which, like a light troop of scouts, precede the main assault, and explore the danger. Deeply significant was his passing sneer against the "Homousianity" of the Nicene council.

In the Brattle Street Church, Samuel Cooper succeeded, in 1746, to the place of his pious father, and in the next year died the able and venerable Colman; while Jonathan Mayhew, of the missionary family of the Mayhews of Martha's Vineyard, succeeded Hooper at the West Church, and Hooper, having taken episcopal orders, became the rector of Trinity Church. At the ordination of Mayhew, he received the charge from the lips of his father; but it was soon apparent, that he had inherited more of the Puritan hostility to episcopacy and the Puritan coldness to royalty than of the divinity which his ancestors had taught amongst the remnant of the aborigines. Bold, liberal, indignant, with talents of some brilliancy, and with much liveliness of style, he was chiefly anxious for freedom from all the bonds which human author-

ity can impose upon the mind, and he seemed to himself to see oppression in the doctrines of his predecessors and his associates. He refrained from union with the Boston association of ministers; he assailed with a high hand the doctrine of justification by faith; he called the Athanasian creed, "a riddle, still somewhat enigmatical, notwithstanding all the labors of the pious and metaphysical Waterland;" he jested on the Canticles; he corresponded with Lardner, Benson, Kippis, and Blackburne; and he ventured allusions which seemed even to himself too rash and reckless, to that doctrine of the divine nature which was held by Christendom, as of all doctrines the most august.

In 1754, Whitefield was again in Boston; but the old enthusiasm awoke no more. Far other voices were now heard from England; voices, whose chief burden was the unbounded praise of freedom of inquiry. Under a shield so broad, the rising spirit of doubt could always obtain a shelter, and push its attacks at once securely and secretly. The dread of creeds and confessions was uttered aloud; especially in sermons and charges at many ordinations. But men were never accustomed to complain earnestly of the jurisdiction of a power whose decisions they approved; or, if they began with opposing simply the power, they would be drawn, in the excitement and prejudice of the contest, to arraign also its decisions. There could be no small peril from any other creeds or confessions, except those of the ancient church, or those which

had been accepted and established by the fathers of New England. One class or the other must have been felt as a burden, or feared as a tribunal of appeal. The ancient creeds had been chiefly framed in defence of the doctrine of the Trinity; the modern added the doctrines of election, redemption, and sanctification. From the latter, especially, the appeal to the language and spirit of the Scriptures was pushed by many divines who disliked the Calvinistic view of election, and were inclined to a general system of theology which lacked the more repulsive features of Calvinism. In a warfare like this, they could not despise the aid of able allies; there were able allies, whom they themselves at first deemed dangerous; but they soon learned the phrases, and ceased to shrink from the peculiarities, of those who fought at their side. Andrew Eliot, in 1754, addressed to a minister, in an ordination sermon, the following language, which was repeated on a similar occasion by Cook, of Sudbury: "As to the sublime and mysterious doctrines of the gospel, the essence of God, the manner of the divine substance, the decrees of God, predestination, election, reprobation, the manner of the divine operation upon his creatures, upon moral agents, and of the Spirit in the conversion of a sinner, (which some delight to dwell upon in their preaching,) they are the deep things of God, which the Spirit of God alone can search out; and when you mention them, if you are wise and have an humble sense of your own weakness and ignorance, you will not be wise

above what is written." In the spirit of such a counsel, these loftier themes were touched by many of the succeeding generation of preachers, only through a repetition of the mere words of Scripture. But a practice so uncandid in its motive, could not but be dishonorable in its issue. If the doctrine of Calvin, or any of these theories, were not believed; if the Westminster Confession or the Thirty-Nine Articles had uttered false or uncertain statements; it was easy, and it would have been manly to have met them with direct denial, sustained by open argument. But to throw a vast mass of glorious truth entirely into obscurity, because its light had dazzled too much; to forbid the exercise of thought on the high things of holy writ, even so far as to their expression in different words; could but end in all doubt and confusion.

CHAPTER IV.

It was in 1756, that an edition of Emlyn's Humble Inquiry appeared at Boston. A direct, elaborate, and well known argument against the deity of the Redeemer was launched abroad, at a period when books were few, and when the printer of such a book could not well have relied merely

on public curiosity for his reimbursement. The enterprise was afterwards ascribed to Mayhew and some of his friends, by those who believed it an honor to his name; and he has been styled the first Unitarian preacher in America. When the elder President Adams, in his old age, affirmed that Unitarianism had been taught by some distinguished divines, as early as the middle of the last century, and named amongst them Gay and Mayhew, his wishes may have deceived his memory in one instance as well as in the other; for, in 1746, Gay had expressly named the Son "a divine person, the mighty God," and the Spirit, a "person of the Godhead." The testimony of the daughter of Mayhew, who knew her father only in her childhood, is no more decisive. He was unknown to Freeman, who describes him as an Anti-Trinitarian of the school of Clarke, and as allowing the pre-existence of Christ, and the atonement. His own writings, except a few daring passages, which rather disclose his temper than his doctrinal system, neither sustain nor repel the censure or the eulogy, unless, indeed, they should be interpreted by their silence. But that silence itself; the influence of his example; and the manner of Chauncy, who, in his funeral sermon, defends him with vigor against the charge of rejecting the atonement, while he speaks not a word of the charge by which it had been, no doubt, accompanied, — all confirm the conclusion that his mind was, at least, leaning to the system of negation. He was not a timid man; and had he absolutely disavowed the ortho-

dox belief, he might probably have avowed his opinion ; but the very boldness of his mind, with the aid of two or three lay friends who had advanced still further, might have led him to indulge his opposition to the commandments of men, by circulating a work that would throw over an established and a mysterious doctrine some air of doubtfulness, and therefore of unimportance. However it were, the book was published, with a dedicatory letter from "a layman," (G. T.,) to the clergy of all denominations in New England, couched in the half-respectful, half-ironical style of a daring but skilful innovator. An answer was prepared by President Burr, of Princeton ; and a sermon by Pemberton, on the divinity of the Saviour, appeared, with a preface bearing the signatures of Sewall, Foxcroft, and Prince, and lamenting, without naming, the recent republication, which had been "to the great grief and offence," they said, "of many amongst us."

The Convention sermon of Rand of Kingston, in 1757, betrayed the spreading sentiment of jealousy, lest any should exercise dominion over the faith of a Christian, and was cool in its tone and spirit ; while that of 1758, by Townsend of Needham, was practical, but indecisive in doctrine. President Burr survived not long his answer to Emelyn ; and Edwards was his successor, only to be snatched away ; while the death of Prince, at Boston, removed another of the honored pillars of ancient orthodoxy. The publications of Mayhew had already stirred up a sentiment of alarm, which

was, perhaps, greatest at a distance. Bellamy, one of the ablest of the stricter Calvinists, after speaking, in 1760, of the manner in which the Shorter Catechism had been remodelled in New Hampshire, "even to omit the Trinity," proceeds in this strain: "Come from New Hampshire along to Boston, and see there a celebrated doctor of divinity, at the head of a large party! He boldly ridicules the doctrine of the Trinity, and denies the doctrine of justification by faith alone, in the sight of all the country, in his book of sermons." Perhaps it was for this cause that the Convention discourse of Parkman of Westborough, in 1761, the theme of which was the constraining love of Christ, closed with the ascription of glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; an ascription scarcely ever appended to the printed sermons of that day. At the following Commencement, too, the venerable John Barnard, almost at the age of fourscore, poured forth a fervent exhortation to the clergy, in which, when he told them that, departing from the truth, they might cast "an unseemly sneer at the great doctrine of the true divinity of Christ," none could mistake the allusion to Mayhew. He himself, however, pursued his own path; and, in the next year, startled men by a sermon on the divine goodness, which, while it denied the possibility of any punishment, except for the good of the offender or of others, certainly urged the argument to a length and with an eagerness, which could not but shake all serious dread of future retribution. Still, when he was publicly

charged by Cleaveland of Ipswich, with denying its eternity, he turned upon his adversary with a copious, and not wholly unmerited invective, and called him to witness that he had employed the very words of scripture, "eternal" and "everlasting."

The son of Cotton Mather, who long after wrote against the doctrine of a final and universal restoration, Lowell of Newburyport, Prentice of Charlestown, and Tucker of Newbury, were the next preachers before the Convention. Tucker had just been accused of heterodoxy by some of his parishioners; and, indeed, when he spoke of being "prepared, by a penitent return to duty, for the pardoning mercy of God by Jesus Christ," he displayed no anxiety to shun the charge of attributing even forgiveness rather to man and his return to duty, which were to precede, than to the Mediator, and that mercy through him which was to follow. In 1766, Mayhew was removed in his prime; Cuming, who had succeeded Prince, had died yet earlier in life; the younger Checkley died also in 1768; Foxcroft and Sewall, within one fortnight, in 1769, and before the end of the same year, the elder Checkley. Except Mayhew, these had been men of like mind and of the ancient school; and the more penetrating minds among the theologians of New England looked not without anxiety for the results of such vacancies. Hopkins of Great Barrington, the acute founder of a system, had arraigned the doctrines of Mayhew during his lifetime, but had extorted no reply. He says, in

1768, that he preached a sermon at the Old South Church, "under a conviction that the doctrine of the divinity of Christ was much neglected, if not disbelieved, by a number of the ministers in Boston." The successor of Mayhew was Howard, who trod gently in his steps, and against whom Croswell publicly aimed the charge of Arianism. The younger Checkley was succeeded by John Lathrop; and two years after the death of Sewall, two pastors, Bacon and Hunt, were settled over the Old South Church, on the same day. Amongst all the clergy of Boston, immediately before the Revolution, there was not one commanding intellect, except that which still glowed in the hoary age of Chauncy.

The public mind was overshadowed and agitated by the tokens of the national struggle which was approaching from afar. While the clergy were more than enough enkindled with political zeal, the people had little leisure for discussions of less immediate urgency. A frost settled upon the pulpit, except when a patriotic warmth had mounted so high; and the love of civil liberty even encouraged the habit of regarding forms of doctrine as a hateful restraint. Almost all of the published sermons of that day, indeed, acknowledge in some manner the atonement; and a very large proportion of them contain language which not even a Semi-Arian could utter. The sagacious West, the antagonist of Edwards and Hopkins, asks in 1764, how any man "can imagine that he faithfully preaches Christ, who very seldom in his discourses men-

tions his name; and who never insists on the doctrine of the atonement, with which the New Testament so much abounds?" Foster, of Stafford, in 1770, violently opposed the term, "total depravity," and openly condemned Supralapsarians and Sublapsarians alike. Some years afterwards, he contended that man is placed, by the gospel, under a new and inferior law of obedience; a doctrine which drew an answer from Buckminster. But Foster was still an explicit Trinitarian, and employs the most emphatic language to describe the humiliation of the Saviour: "Behold the Ancient of days, the Father of eternity, pursuant to the divine counsel, leaving the realms of bliss and everlasting day, and becoming an infant of a span long for you!" Minds less confused than his, refused, however, to bind themselves by any very distinct statements of doctrines. President Locke delivered, in 1772, one of the most dry, liberal, and philosophical addresses, which was ever preceded by a text; and, speaking of our Lord as "coming down, a ray of his Father's glory," he declared, however, that "Christians were far from agreeing how to settle the canon of fundamentals." This example of Locke as a moral preacher, might have been more persuasive, had he sustained the reputation of a moral man, when, soon after, he withdrew from the academic chair. Langdon, the succeeding president, though once charged with Arianism, yet always declared himself a Trinitarian, and was a Calvinist after the model of the synod of Dort.

Morehead, of the Federal Street Church, died in 1773, and had no successor till after the Revolution. Byles, of the Hollis Street Church, followed his son, the rector of Christ Church, to the provinces which observed their loyalty. In 1775, the dismissal of Bacon, and the death of Hunt, left the Old South Church for several years without a pastor. The Summer Street Church, too, was vacant almost till the close of hostilities. Pemberton died also in 1777; and Eliot, who had remained in Boston during the blockade, survived him but a year. Wight was elected to the pulpit of Byles; Clarke became the colleague of Chauncy; Eckley, in 1779, was ordained over the Old South Church, which then worshipped in King's Chapel; and John Eliot very naturally succeeded his father. During the war, the voice of religion, however strong in private breasts, could not often rise on the air above the thunders of battle. In 1785, the number of parishes in Boston was actually less than half a century before. The successor of Cooper, in Brattle street, was Thacher, whose fervid eloquence, while he was yet almost a boy, had won the admiration of Whitefield.

CHAPTER V.

AT the close of the Revolution, while the future constitution of American society was yet unsettled, no master-mind was active amongst the theologians of New England. The elder Edwards was long since departed; the younger never held the sceptre of his father; Chauncy was sinking into the grave; Dwight was still very young; Stiles lavished considerable strength on a heterogeneous multitude of topics; and if Hopkins and Bellamy still swayed a rising and an extensive school, it was probably more through the absence of other leaders, than through the felicity of their own powers or system. At such a time it was that an Unitarian congregation was first known in America. The war, dispersing the officers of the British government, had left but a handful of the worshippers at King's Chapel. After it had been closed for some time, it was for five years lent to the Old South congregation, banished as they were from their desecrated edifice. Its ministers, who had fled, returned no more; and though an Episcopal Church, it was, of course, without episcopal supervision. Seven years of confusion had gone by, when the remnant of the people, increased by some accessions of such as had purchased pews of late, but were not familiar with the system of the English Church, fixed their eyes upon James Freeman,

a student of much promise, and employed him to read the liturgy. He was attached to the ritual, but had yet to frame his theological opinions. He gave himself to the current of free investigation; and no ecclesiastical authority restrained his progress, or menaced him with public annoyance. Some changes in the Common Prayer were required by the change in political relations; and, after a time, Freeman avowed his wish to change; with these, those parts in which the Trinity was acknowledged. Although his manner was bad, he had taste and talent, and great frankness of character, and had acquired the regard of the congregation. If Clarke be excepted, he was probably the ablest man who then occupied the desk in Boston. Doubts like his own had been at least encouraged by Chauncy and Mayhew; it was, in the judgment of many, one of those questions "of the manner of the divine substance," which, like Andrew Eliot, most of the Congregational clergy of the capital seemed willing to destine to a discreet silence; for Freeman was ready, with them, to employ all the words and phrases of Scripture. By a vote of twenty to seven, the proprietors of the chapel adopted the ritual with his proposed alterations. He asked in vain for orders from the new bishops of the United States; and in 1787, the wardens proceeded deliberately, and with a kind of laying on of hands to a kind of ordination, against which seventeen protested. From this time, Unitarianism became a substantial reality in Boston.

In the same year, Chauncy had departed; and Belknap had been installed over the Federal Street Church. Wight was dismissed in 1788, and West was his successor. In 1790, extracts from the book of Emlyn were republished at Boston; and Alexander, of Mendon, prepared an elaborate answer. At this period, most of the sermons and charges at ordinations comprised some allusion to the Trinity, to the divinity of Christ, or at least to the atonement and to eternal retribution. But the Hopkinsian theologians, at whose head Emmous of Franklin, with his clear pen, was now taking his place, had so remoulded the system of Calvin, that while they seemed to themselves to glide over its harshness, they terribly shocked the religious sensibilities of mankind. With whatever satisfaction the calm student in their metaphysical divinity might contemplate some of its lucid outlines, it could not supplant, in the pulpit and in private discourse, the living glow of scriptural appeal and instruction, without swelling, far and wide, the popular disgust which would one day become a formidable and almost irreconcilable foe. Men could not hear with complacency, instead of the gospel, discussions of the questions, whether the Almighty was not the author of sin; whether a saint could not so far submit his own will to the divine will as to consent to lose his own soul; whether any promise was given to the prayers of the unregenerate. The very discussion of such themes, which were older than the Hopkinsians, distracted many a community that would gladly have lis-

tened to the most solemn truths of the Bible, and heaped up, almost everywhere, a mass of prejudice, which "bode its time."

But the clergy of Boston, and many of their remoter brethren, presented no such repulsive doctrine. Fifty years were now complete since the first visit of Whitefield; and could another Whitefield have passed that way, not only his burning eloquence and unrestrained zeal, but the very themes of which he loved to speak, would have come upon the startled congregations like a tempest upon some calm lake, with its glassy expanse. The same towers and spires, indeed, still looked down upon the generation of republicans, which had looked down upon the squadrons that watched a province. Only the churches in Brattle street and Hollis street had been rebuilt; and while one or two congregations had ceased to exist, the chapel once built for the worship of the peculiar servants of royalty, had been ranged with the tabernacles of the Puritans. But a Whitefield had now found no Foxcroft, or Gee, or Colman, or Sewall, or Prince; and scarcely even the doctrine, with the hostility, of Chauncy. How much, indeed, the system of their fathers had yielded to a riper knowledge of the Scriptures, to the freer march of reason, to the caprice of innovation, or to the neutralizing deadness of the spirit of doubt, no eye could discover. It was a process of which the extent was known only in private circles or private bosoms. The pulpit taught chiefly those general lessons of upright practice, founded upon those

general truths of natural religion, and those general facts of the evangelical history, which had never been questioned by any who bore the Christian name, and which alone had been heard from so many divines of the English Church, during so much of that century. But the minister of the English Church had still read a liturgy, which distinctly announced to the people the doctrines from which, as an honest man, he could not in the theory have departed, without forsaking his office. The only liturgical form which could fasten such a restraint on the liberal ministers of New England, was the doxology at the close of the service; and this was so inconsiderable a part, that the custom might easily cease without notice, and even without motive, through an accidental omission, which might grow into an usage, or through the mere taste of the musical performers. In prayers, he but uttered his own language; in preaching, he chose his own topics; he disclaimed and disdained the shackles of uninspired forms of doctrine; and, sustained by a widespread ardor for liberty of conscience, he declined meeting the cross-examination of the obtrusive. For the charge of heresy, though it were true, he had furnished no foundation; and he had furnished as little for the praise of orthodoxy. If, now and then, some bolder expression startled the ear of a watchful sentinel, and spread for a moment an alarm or a suspicion of treason, in the next hour the broad banner of the Scriptures was unfurled, the words of the Scriptures were proclaimed abroad; and

who could ask for more? Even now, it is possible that the theology of those divines may be misinterpreted; but if it should be, they but pay the penalty of a position so close, so cautious, and so indecisive.

As early as 1789, Freeman, whose attitude gave boldness to the doubts of others, could say in a letter to Belsham, the English leader of Socinianism, that there were "many churches in which the worship was strictly Unitarian." The community and the clergy felt that the opposite doctrine was shaken; but where, how far, in what minds, and in what congregations, could only be determined by observing accurately silence as well as language. "Individuals, both clergymen and laymen," says one of their advocates, "were satisfied with the discreet enjoyment of their opinions, while they were not called to profess any thing contrary to them;" and there was not one of the ministers of Boston, who had the firmness of heart and the distinctness of faith, which might have urged him, as a friend or foe to change, to hasten its development. The oldest pastor, Howard, went down into the vale of years "neither a Calvinist," said Freeman, "nor a Trinitarian." Lathrop spoke with significance when he said, "the sayings of the prophets and of the apostles, and especially of Jesus, demand assent; but not the sayings of Calvin or Arminius, nor of Saint Athanasius." Eckley was earnest in heart, but of a mild and tolerant temper; and, while he held the other doctrines of the ancient system, hesitated to affirm the

absolute equality of the Son with the Father. The yielding, if not contradictory words of Thacher were like the courtesy of Glaucus to Diomed; an exchange of the golden armor of revealed doctrine for the brazen shield and helmet of accidental opinion. "For myself," said he, "I can say that I believe the true and proper divinity of Jesus Christ; the awful depravity of human nature; the necessity of regeneration and of the agency of the Divine Spirit in effecting the change; the insufficiency of our own works to justify us in the sight of God; our acceptance with him only on account of the merits and atonement of the Son of God; the necessity of holiness in heart and life, in order to fit us for heaven; and the utter futility of the hope that, in the future state, we shall have the opportunity of rectifying the mistakes as to our own religious character, which we make in the present. I could easily declare these, I say, to be doctrines which I esteem to be clearly revealed in the word of God, and necessary to be plainly preached by any minister who wishes to do his duty; but great and good men, men much greater and better than I am, have materially differed from me in their ideas upon these subjects." Well might the cause of orthodoxy exclaim, while it was thus modestly upheld for himself, and abandoned for mankind,

"Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis!"

Although it was said of Eliot, that in his youth, when he was invited to become assistant to the

Rector at Halifax, he "fully approved the doctrines and views of the Episcopalians," and after his death, that he "was far from considering all opinions concerning the mysteries of Christianity alike innocent or safe," and was "remote from each of the extremes in systematic theology;" yet this was said when one of these extremes had been wonderfully removed, in the community in which he lived, beyond that negative sphere, where shone his favorite authors, "Erasmus, Le Clerc, and especially Jortin." Clarke was a man of elegant powers and close study. His publications afford no token of his belief, beyond the most elementary doctrines; but he was viewed as the head of a party which was moving steadfastly though quietly onward. Everett was less eminent, but espoused the latitudinarian side; and in 1792 retired to secular occupations. West had been educated in Calvinism; but it is said that in his later years he was not entirely the same; and the changes of that day were mostly in one direction. Belknap had published in 1779, when he was minister of Dover, a sermon, in which he spoke of the Saviour as "that glorious and exalted being, who was in the form of God, who was in the beginning with God, and (by virtue of the most perfect and intimate union of the WHOLE Deity to him) was God;" and of his pre-existent state as "a state of entire union with God, and perfect happiness resulting therefrom;" but when in 1792, the sermon was republished at Boston for general circulation, these latter words, and those in parenthesis, were omitted.

It would be very unjust to suppose that Unitarianism, as a distinct form of belief or negation, was held and concealed by a large company of the pastors of Boston and of Massachusetts. They were within the region where the atmosphere of doubt hung thick and heavy. So often had they assured themselves and mankind that good men might differ, and that freedom of thought must not be fettered, as at length to have lost the sense of the perfect, absolute certainty of any interpretation or of any truth declared by such interpretation. But if it were not certain, it would not be infinitely important; and thus, that which in all ages had been deemed the foundation of Christian faith and hope, was left in doubt and dimness, to the mere chances of a popular opinion, from which the appointed guides withheld its due instruction. Had there but been a class of divines, nay, had there been but one high, earnest and eloquent mind, that, while estranged from the metaphysics of Edwards and Hopkins, and careless of Calvinism, "the name and the thing" alike, had firmly upheld and fervently preached the doctrines which all Christendom honored; nay, had even a Dwight, without his magisterial mien, been found amongst the clergy of Massachusetts, the wave of innovation might probably have ebbed into its accustomed channel; the spirit of doubt might have departed with its mists; and the rock of revelation might have been seen and felt, as unshaken as ever.

CHAPTER VI.

IN the Convention sermon of 1793, Barnard, of Salem, admitted a difference amongst the clergy. Coldly and calmly, he required that no condemnation should be pronounced; and, as if to throw off from all a possible imputation of assenting to Socinianism, he ventured to introduce the Redeemer as speaking, and as saying, "I left the high honors and enjoyments of my Father's presence." But upon the shores of Plymouth, Robbins still preached the ancestral faith; and when he was called, in 1794, to stand before his brethren, he determined not to descend to the grave, without having lifted on high the banner which the Pilgrims had transmitted to his hands. He spoke, though not too boldly, of depravity, of the atonement, and of Christ, "in the most unequivocal sense, the true God and eternal life." It was in that year that Priestley landed in America; but he came not to Boston, and his presence would scarcely have been desired by a single pastor; for his daring frankness and his extreme opinions might easily have been fatal to the gentle harmony which, at whatever price, all seemed most studious to preserve. It was in the same year that Kirkland was ordained over the Summer-street Church; and his father, a venerable missionary, thus charged him in the presence of the people, in words which may often

have rung in his ear: "O never rob him of his glory, who is God-man, Mediator; never deny the Lord who hath bought you!"

A little while after the arrival of Priestley, Freeman wrote to Belsham, that he was "acquainted with a number of ministers, particularly in the southern part of Massachusetts, who avowed and publicly preached the Unitarian doctrine;" while others, "more cautious, contented themselves with leading their hearers, by a course of rational and prudent sermons, gradually and insensibly, to embrace it." "The people," he added, though he did not quite approve this method, were "kept out of the reach of false opinions, and prepared for the impressions which would be made on them by more bold and ardent successors, who would probably be raised up when these timid characters were removed off the stage." So sagacious a prophet was doubtless an accurate, even if a sanguine, observer.

Belknap, in the Convention sermon of 1796, still speaks of "the Holy Spirit, with *his* powerful influence;" an expression, however, which sometimes appears in the discourses of those who can hardly have believed the distinct personality of the Comforter. He "silently adores," too, "that tremendous justice which suffers so many unhappy souls to plunge themselves into the misery of the future world." In 1797, Tappan delivered the discourse; who, five years before, had succeeded Wigglesworth, in the Divinity Professorship at Cambridge, and who, to clearness of thought and

eloquence of style, added the fervor of a pious heart, and the steadfastness of a faith that saw in the "proper divinity of Jesus Christ, the rock of his eternal life." A few weeks before the meeting of 1798, Clarke, in the midst of a sermon on "the Holy One who inhabiteth the praises of Israel," dropped down, smitten with fatal apoplexy. He was but forty-two; and the "unfeigned piety and active goodness" of his life were commemorated in the Convention sermon by Osgood, of Medford, a divine who adhered to the orthodox creed, but with determined mildness. A few weeks after, Belknap, whose historical labors adorned his country, and whose published discourses have a correct and solemn tone, was struck down by a blow almost as sudden. In the Convention sermon of 1799, a warm tribute to his memory was paid by the aged Forbes, of Gloucester, who, while he displayed an aversion to other forms of doctrine than the Scriptures, and a desire to divest religious truth of mystery, yet alluded to "the divine, the human, and the mediatorial character" of One, "in whom alone these characters could be united."

From time to time, some voice was heard, uttering what many feared, or hesitated, to believe. Single ministers called out, to admonish all of the rapid current, which, without a breath of air, was wafting them away. Leonard Worcester, a printer of Worcester, who had vainly attempted to lead Bancroft into a controversy on doctrine, was not afraid to say in 1795, that "Socinianism or Arianism had, very extensively if not very generally,

taken the place of Arminianism." Much, indeed, of the Arminianism of the times had left so poor a station in its system for the office of a Redeemer, that the mind thus prepared, might easily start with wonder at the dazzling majesty with which the common doctrine invested his person. But when Emerson, in 1799, succeeded Clarke at the oldest church in Boston, the advanced guard of innovation was pushed forward. Emerson was a pleasing writer, and filled his station gracefully; but his mind was prepared distinctly to decry and deride the Trinitarian theology, and his rhetoric seems scarcely to have touched, as it skimmed along, the surface of revelation. The Convention sermon of 1800 was by Lathrop, of Boston, the constant champion of freedom from formulas of faith. That of 1801, by Dana, of Newburyport, was unequivocally orthodox. Almost the last of the "charming accents" of Thacher, were heard in that of 1802; for in a few months, he hastened to a milder sky, and sank into the grave.

After the pulpit of Belknap had been filled for three years by Popkin, afterwards the Greek Professor at Cambridge, the year 1803 was marked by the settlement, in their stead, of William Ellery Channing. The Federal-street parish was then small; but the thoughtful, fervid eloquence of the preacher soon drew an admiring and devoted assembly. With a delicate frame and an unpleasing countenance, he spoke in subdued tones and in short sentences, that singularly blended simplicity and animation. Meditative habits of mind had

nourished his aspirations for the happiness of man ; and consciousness of strength breathed boldness into his high argument. He began his brilliant career, the pupil of that undefined Christianity which then reigned around him ; “ abstaining,” as he afterwards said, “ most scrupulously from every expression which could be construed into an acknowledgment of the Trinity.” But such was the unaccustomed glow of the doctrines which he could proclaim, when they came from his lips, that some of the younger and more zealous hearers of Eckley, who was, at that time, perhaps, the most orthodox of the Boston clergy, withdrew to Federal-street, imagining that the faith of their ancestors was rising from its slumbers. In the beginning of 1805, too, at the age of twenty-one, Buckminster was ordained as the successor of Thacher. His father, the excellent minister of Portsmouth, was a devout Calvinist ; and could not but remind him, when he preached at his ordination, though but in a passing allusion, how he had “ presented him at the baptismal font, and washed him in the name of the sacred Trinity.” The son, whose whole ministry was accomplished before the age at which many men have just completed their preparation, gave himself to the breeze which bore on his elder brethren of all the churches of Boston, in such a tranquil harmony. All that was extraordinary in his powers, and all that was beautiful in his life, was added to the dawning beams of that day of supposed illumination which was ready to break, but still lingered, on the mountains.

For, in the meanwhile, Tappan, the honored Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, had died in peace. The Professorship remained for two years unoccupied; and reflecting men perceived that the hour of conflict was certainly approaching. Hollis, the founder, a London merchant, had given a partial endowment for the support of a Professor "of sound, orthodox principles;" and was himself at once a Calvinist, a Baptist, and the friend of a large religious liberty. Of the five Fellows of the College, three were ministers; Lathrop, Pearson and Eliot. The choice fell upon Ware, of Hingham, a divine of great respectability of character, but of very moderate powers, and distinguished chiefly by his supposed and undisclaimed Unitarianism. The right to examine him on his doctrines, however, was denied; and these, when he was questioned by a member of the Senate, were not distinctly disclosed. Indignation could no longer be restrained; Pearson retired from his Professorship; and Spring, of Newburyport, at once published two sermons on the self-existence of Christ; in which he openly and directly assailed this appointment, as a violation of a sacred trust, and a most perilous triumph of heresy. He did not exaggerate its importance. From that day, the continuance of union among the churches of the Puritans was really impossible; and those who would not at once cast themselves upon the sea of strife saw the waves mounting higher and higher with every year, till the narrow ground on which they stood was abandoned or overwhelmed.

It was indeed wonderful that, by a kind of consent, the gathering storm should gather so silently. But in truth the parties themselves were unprepared for acts of decision, which must estrange parish from parish, neighbor from neighbor, shake the whole system of the commonwealth to its foundations, rend many communities asunder, and bring into families and into individual hearts a boundless distress. To pause was natural, and was merciful; even though to proceed might have been martyrdom for principles. Besides, the liberal divines by no means knew the strength with which they could stand together, should a separation be hastened. Few of them, probably, had embraced the Socinian doctrine; and these might have dreaded that a wider gulf would be found between themselves and the Arians or Semi-arians, than between these and the orthodox. Had the contest been brought to an issue on the ground of the atonement, it might have ended in an utter overthrow of the innovating party. They were content to proceed without an open struggle; trusting much to time and to the progress of the mind, unincumbered by authority. On the other side, the orthodox were somewhat divided by the metaphysical differences between the main body of the older Calvinists and the detachment that followed Hopkins. Some of them, too, like Lathrop of West Springfield, now for half a century the grave and sensible minister of one parish, could not well bear the prospect of a deadly schism between churches which had stood side by side from

the first settlement of the country. Even amongst the orthodox, the jealousy against authoritative determination in doctrine was somewhat excessive and morbid. They were not without hope that the steps of some of their brethren might yet be retraced. They had not the experience of the succeeding generation. Some of them were probably in a state of indecision on one or another question which might become the test; so that a wide controversy might throw their own ranks into an unhappy confusion. Such also had been the prudence of their adversaries, that exposed and prominent points of attack were not numerous: it was a perilous thing to be unable to sustain a serious charge, after it should once have been advanced at the public bar; and, if prejudice were once thus driven to the side of error, the mischief must be far more disastrous. With mingled hopes and fears, they remained almost silent; but on both sides, every preparation went on.

CHAPTER VII.

THE great works of Horsley and Magee had expelled from the English Church most of the remnants of that doubting temper which had once

sprung into visible existence. These works had crossed the sea, as soon, at least, as the Unitarian volumes which were presented to public libraries, and they had aided to sharpen the zeal and stir the suspicions of those who knew how much was now at hazard. Not a single book had yet been written against the Trinitarian doctrine, by any American pen, except the treatise on the atonement, published in 1803, by Ballou, the Universalist leader. The minister of Mansfield in Connecticut, whose name was Sherman, now published his disbelief in the Trinity; and was deposed by his brethren. Such tidings could not but enkindle still more the suppressed indignation of such a man as Emerson; who, at the head of the oldest church in the capital of New England, knew well that he was open to a censure as stern from any ecclesiastical body which should represent the hereditary theology. A periodical publication, called the *Monthly Anthology*, was at that period just commenced, and chiefly under his charge; and though it was dedicated to literature, its occasional blows at orthodoxy and its habitual praises of religious liberality, were not the less effective. On the death of Howard, his post was supplied by Lowell. The Convention sermon of 1806 was preached by Lyman, of Hatfield, who, on the Connecticut, upheld with vigor an unyielding Calvinism, and who now, before the-assembled clergy, dared to speak of "total depravity," and of Christ, "essentially God, and equal with the Father." An orthodox magazine, the *Panoplist*, arose, and for many years did faithful service to the cause

of its founders. It would seem that the sermon of Lyman had been resented ; for the next preacher, Reed, of Bridgewater, for some time a member of Congress, devoted his whole discourse to a heartless inculcation of indifference to doctrine ; censuring, in the common language of the day, the practice of "anathematizing others on account of their religious opinions ;" while he denounced such "censorious persons" as persecutors ; and enforced that maxim, so happily prepared to equalize all truth and falsehood, and make the reign of doubt perpetual — that "we should remember that we differ from our adversary as much as he differs from us."

Willard, the President of Harvard College, a man of moderate, probably of moderately orthodox, opinions, died before the election of Ware to the Divinity Professorship. His successor, Webber, a mathematician, had those views which Ware could name "liberal and enlightened ;" and during his presidency of six years he relinquished the theological influence of the institution to his more decided and zealous associate. But a mightier influence was arising in an Essex village. Almost at the same moment, magnificent schemes of bounty to the Church of Christ were formed in the bosoms of several persons of great wealth, in Newburyport and the neighboring region. A few eminent clergymen, of decided Calvinism, Dana, Spring, Morse, Pearson, and Woods, were their counsellors ; and their designs at length centred in the foundation of the Theological Seminary at

Andover, with a princely endowment, for which the names of Bartlett, Brown, and Phillips will be honored with those of Wykeham and the "Lady Margaret." It sprung into flourishing life at its very birth; and the muffled step of the innovating bands felt itself compelled to halt, as if it had stumbled all at once on the unseen outposts of a strong battalion.

There were several landmarks, whose appearance continually suggested the true position of the parties. The creed or covenant of a Congregational church may be changed by itself, without counsel or publication; and sometimes the older covenants had been so rigidly Calvinistic, that some change might have been approved by all considerate Christians. But when the clergy met in councils, to assist in the ordination of a brother, the examination of his faith, which custom had sanctioned and conscience might require, was often discarded as an encroachment on his freedom of doctrine and that of the people by whom he had been elected. The exchange of pulpits brought the same topics home, with the same earnestness, to the heart of the sincere believer in a revealed system of doctrine. To demand such intercourse, without offering any other assurance of a Christian faith than the general declaration of belief in the Scriptures, was a claim which could never have been made, except by innovators who dreaded too early an exposure; and could never be granted, except under an almost desperate determination to sacrifice all for peace. It was not granted; but

was the occasion of much strife for years. Still the parties met and mingled at the summons of other churches, with which their own had held hereditary alliance. When, after a struggle, the choice of the Old South parish fell upon the mild and conciliating Huntington, to be the associate of the mild and conciliating Eckley, and the Church was recovered or preserved for the doctrines of its fathers, Lathrop, Channing and Lowell, all publicly united in the act of ordination. On the death of West, Holley, a brilliant orator, was installed over the Hollis-street Church, and Eckley preached the sermon. The second Church in Dorchester invited Codman, a young clergyman of very respectable connexions and independent fortune in Boston, to become their pastor. Conscious of the nature of a ground which might soon crumble beneath his feet, he said that, "as Arian and Socinian settlements had of late years crept into some of our churches, he thought it his duty to declare that he believed the Father, Son and Holy Ghost to be the one living and true God," and asked that the Psalms and Hymns of Watts might be restored, instead of a collection which excluded the doxologies, and contained expressions derogatory to the Trinity. His conditions were accepted; and with this advantage he assumed a post at which he could stand for the defence of his brethren. At his ordination, he presented to the council an orthodox confession of his faith; while the sermon was preached by Channing, and Buckminster, Eckley, Osgood, Harris and Lowell performed the other portions of the service.

In the Convention sermon of 1808, Chaplin, of Groton, preached "the Trinity in the Unity of the Godhead." But an important movement was now added, by the introduction of collections of hymns at the First Church and the Church in Brattle-street, prepared by Emerson and Buckminster. The collection of Belknap had superseded the Psalms and Hymns of Watts in the Boston churches; but it still acknowledged doctrines which were heard no more from the pulpits. With an unsparing hand, at whatever cost of taste or sense, the sacrificial atonement, the deity of the Redeemer, the personality of the Spirit, and the more solemn allusions to future retribution, were stricken from the new collection. The Panoplist called on Emerson, it called on Buckminster, it called on all the liberal divines, if they disbelieved the doctrine of the Trinity, to oppose to it an open denial. Its call was unanswered, or answered with the reproach of uncharitableness. But within the space of one or two years after the year 1808, more Unitarian publications appeared than during the whole previous period since the settlement of New England. Even the venerable and forbearing Lathrop, of West Springfield, was so much moved that he pronounced "those who acknowledge Christ as a teacher, but deny him as a Redeemer sent to deliver us from punishment by his death," to be "justly ranked among those who bring in damnable heresies." A few men of zeal and of wealth determined to fix one more rallying point for the strength of Orthodoxy in Boston,

where the Congregational churches were still less numerous than when the population was feebler. They organized, in 1809, the church in Park-street; and its tall spire soon rose in the heart of the city, to tell the commonwealth that innovation was to have no undisputed triumph in its capital.

Cary, the assistant of Freeman, in his first sermon, suggesting the possibility that some might ask his "speculative" opinions, declared that they were "really of too little consequence" to be mentioned at such a moment of harmony. The Improved New Testament, a gross attempt of some English Socinians, was republished at Boston in 1809, probably under the patronage of Emerson; but discretion shrunk from espousing its introduction. Spring, of Newburyport, preached the Convention sermon. In the very midst of a throng of apprehensions, the orthodox Congregationists looked up to the eternal hills; consecrated themselves, as it were, anew; and founded, for the universal propagation of the gospel, the American Board of Foreign Missions. Two ministers of New Hampshire, in the mean time, Thomas and Noah Worcester, pushed before the community a theory of their own. It appeared in several sermons and pamphlets; especially in one which had the appropriate title of "Bible News." It taught that the Saviour was the Son of God in the same sense throughout in which men are the sons of their fathers; was constituted the Creator; and is the object of divine honors; but that the unity of the Father is still absolute and supreme. With a

doctrine like this, Noah Worcester, one of those men whose abilities are just sufficient to produce results which they neither design nor comprehend, shook the faith of one of his contemporaries ; prepared the march of stronger and bolder thinkers ; and then, year after year, bewailed the obduracy of those who would not tranquilly extend to him the hand of fraternal fellowship. On the other side, Abiel Abbot, minister of Coventry, in Connecticut, had been observed by some of his hearers to omit all mention of the divinity and atonement of Christ, except in the language of the Scriptures ; and when he had been questioned, had at length avowed his disbelief. After some delay, he was displaced through the action of the neighboring clergy ; and the General Association of Connecticut published their opinion, that no clergyman ought to exchange ministerial labors with any man claiming to be a minister of Christ, and denying his divinity. Abbot was of Massachusetts, and his friends and counsellors were there ; so that his rejection was the theme of much and severe comment.

But the Park-street meeting-house having been opened at the beginning of 1810, with the avowal of those principles which, a year after, began to be proclaimed by the impassioned and sometimes incautious eloquence of Griffin, a very bold man, placed himself in the front of the liberal party for a moment, to perform an act of signal hardihood. This was Porter, of Roxbury, the son of a minister who had declared, when Whitefield had lost his

first renown, that he could never cease to honor and bless him, since, through his words, he himself, although before a Christian preacher, had been drawn to the true waters of salvation. The son was appointed to preach the Convention sermon of 1810; and he put the trumpet to his mouth, and blew a blast of defiance, which startled many an eye from its slumbers. His theme was "Christian Simplicity," and its exposure to injury. After naming various doctrines, amongst which were "Original Sin, a Trinity in Unity, the mere Humanity, super-angelic Nature or absolute Deity of Christ, and the absolute Eternity of Punishment," he proceeded in this language: "My individual belief in respect to the truth or error of these points, can be of but little importance, and my subject no way requires that it should be given. It rather becomes me to follow the example which has been sometimes set by learned judges on the bench, when difficult questions suggested themselves, but whose decision the main subject before them did not require, and prudently say, '*Neque teneo, neque refello.*' But it is pertinent to the object of this discourse, and consonant to my serious and deliberate conviction, to observe, that I cannot place my finger on any one article in the list of doctrines just mentioned, the belief or rejection of which I consider as essential to the Christian faith or character. I believe that an innumerable company of Christians, who never heard of these articles, or who were divided in their opinion respecting them, have fallen asleep in Jesus; and that

innumerable persons of the same description are following after." So deliberate an utterance of so boundless an indifference was more welcome, perhaps, to his opponents, than to many of his associates. The Panoplist declared that "no man who opened his eyes on the actual state of things, doubted the efforts by a few in the heart of New England to establish and extend Socinian views." Dwight did not hesitate to say of Boston in 1810, that "Unitarianism seemed to be the predominating system." It was distinctly lifted to the highest place of dignity, when in that year, on the sudden death of Webber, the presidency of Harvard College was given to Kirkland, a fine scholar, affable and graceful, but one who with a smile could erase whatever was mysterious or spiritual from his religion. He began his academic reign by attending a ball which was given by the students. Still it was true, in the judgment of one of his friends of the same belief, that "had he been an acknowledged defender of Unitarianism, he could not have been elected to that place."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE people of the commonwealth had no inclination to abandon substantially the religion of their ancestors. Had it been at once renounced, so far as to the rejection of the divinity and atonement of the Saviour, the mass would probably have arisen and shaken off the new teachers. But the love of union, quietness and good-will would permit no such exertion, except the provocation should be distinct and intolerable. Until the pastor had spoken, to charge him with heresy, was deemed calumnious; and few or none had yet spoken. There was an extensive prejudice against the sterner features of Calvinism. Men were slow to mark the omissions of the pulpit; and when they drew attention at last from some more zealous observer, the rest, perhaps, would no longer regret the defect to which they were completely accustomed. Both parties even now might recoil from the gulf of division. So Puffer, of Berlin, in the Convention sermon of 1811, while he praised the "eternal Son of God," and insisted that godliness had flourished or declined as evangelical principles had been maintained or forsaken, yet mourned aloud over the dissensions amongst the ministry.

On the last day of April, 1811, Eckley expired, at the the age of threescore and one; a fortnight after died Emerson, twenty years younger; and

on the third day after his death, Samuel Cooper Thacher, the son of the late Brattle-street pastor, was ordained as the successor of Kirkland. In 1812, after many attacks of epilepsy, the young and winning Buckminster preceded his father by a single day in his entrance within the vale where truth can be mistaken no longer. At this period, William Wells, a publisher of much respectability, in Boston, and a correspondent of Belsham, wrote that "the tenets of Unitarianism had spread very extensively in New England; that most of the Boston clergy and respectable laity were Unitarian; but that at the same time there was but one church *professedly* Unitarian; the controversy was seldom introduced into the pulpit; and the majority of those who were Unitarians were such perhaps without consciousness." The letters of Freeman and Wells were incorporated by Belsham into his *Life of Lindsay*, which was published in 1812; yet, almost three years went by before a copy of that book found its way into hands which were willing to give it publicity in New England. In 1811, the *Monthly Anthology* ceased to exist; but in 1812, the *General Repository* was begun in its place at Cambridge. It was without the responsibility of clerical editorship; and it pronounced the doctrine of the Trinity to be "the greatest corruption of modern times."

Other bodies of Christians were not asleep; and Gardiner, of Trinity Church, and Baldwin, the most eminent of the Baptists, printed sermons

which were designed to be "Preservatives against Unitarianism." The contest between churches and parishes now began. Under the Congregational practice, the church, so far as it could act in a corporate character, was composed only of the communicants; who, on assenting to certain articles of faith and agreement, and affording satisfactory evidence of their sincerity, had each been received to the highest ordinance of Christian fellowship. The parish or town was empowered by the ancient laws of Massachusetts, confirmed by the bill of rights, to choose its own minister; but the church also exercised the right of election. In both bodies, the same person was commonly designated; and when they were thus in harmony, he was placed in office. Where an accidental difference occurred, the necessity of peace would admonish both to turn to another candidate. The more devout portion of the people would, of course, be found in the church; but it might still happen that persons of worth and conscientiousness might sometimes be excluded by articles of faith, so minute and rigid, as to clash with their convictions. Such, however, would hardly be many; and the controversies which were commenced were not those of devout men claiming the admission to the Lord's table, which was denied them by men as devout but more rigid in sentiment. They were rather struggles of indifference to doctrine, on the side of men too little in earnest to desire communion, against that firmness with which the pastor and the more pious of his congregation felt themselves called to

contend for a distinct faith, the faith of revelation and of Christendom. Codman, of Dorchester, first met this onset, on the high vantage-ground which had been secured by his avowal at his settlement, and which was still further strengthened by his pecuniary independence. He had hardly been established a year in his parish, when forty of his parishioners expressed their disappointment that he had not indiscriminately exchanged his ministerial services with the Boston clergy. He refused all pledges, and was at first sustained by a majority of his parishioners ; but when the minority offered their pews for sale, the desire for unity, and the temporal interests of the society prevailed, and a vote of the parish asked the exchanges. Again the pastor refused to abandon his control, and a small majority voted to extinguish the connection. But, upheld by the affectionate attachment of a large majority of the parish, and by almost all the church, Codman yielded nothing. A council was held, and equally divided, for the obvious reason that it was drawn equally from the two parties ; another, with an uneven number, and with Lathrop of West Springfield at its head, was summoned ; and the result was, that, while a large company of the parishioners withdrew, the pastor maintained his place. Less happy was Burr, of Sandwich. Forsaking the less decided theology with which he had begun his ministry, he preached the doctrines of Calvinism with zeal ; and in 1811, was dismissed by a vote of the congregation. One sixth of the whole number of his church concurred in the

act, while the others separated with him, built a house of worship, retained the name of the First Church, and excluded those members who had opposed their doctrine. The parish invited Goodwin to the ancient pulpit, a Unitarian and an advocate of the restoration of all men; and the title and rights of the original church remained in contest.

While these events were in progress, the charge of Unitarianism was either repelled as unjustifiable, or borne with more of the aspect of patience, than with that of exulting illumination. A Socinian publication in London had ventured to give to the world some statements of the prevalence of Unitarian sentiments in Boston and in Massachusetts. Parkman, a young divine of the most respectable connections in Boston, happening to be in London, replied to the article. He said that, having excellent opportunities of cultivating the acquaintance of the clergy, he had never heard from more than one of them, in public or in private, any thing for which he could have a right to pronounce the speaker a Unitarian; and that, except "at most four or five heads of families, there was scarcely a parishioner in Boston, who would not be shocked at having his minister preach the peculiarities of Unitarianism." He did not assert that they worshipped the Trinity, but described them as "holding high and exalted views of the person and mediation of Jesus Christ, resting on the merits of his atonement, his cross and passion, and zealous to pay the honor which they believed due to his name." "We are not," he concluded,

“and permit me to add, as long as we study the Scriptures, I believe we shall not become converts to your new doctrine.” Parkman returned home, and on the death of Eliot, in 1813, became his successor. For a single year, Abbot occupied the place of Emerson, and then fell in the flower of his days. The desk of Buckminster was held by one who began as early, a race as brilliant, as that of his predecessor; but more various and longer. It was only for a very short portion of that race, that Edward Everett put off the academic laurels, and became the applauded orator of Brattle-street. The Convention sermon of 1812 had been preached by Morse, of Charlestown, in a tone of moderation; and in that of 1813, President Kirkland expressed “the whole pith and marrow of liberal divinity;” and in the judgment of his friends, “without directly impugning any of the tenets of the opposite theology, examined them completely, and brushed them away like cobwebs.” The council summoned by the ancient church of Deerfield, was about to proceed to the ordination of Willard, the chosen candidate. Its members, however, proceeded not so far without inquiry; and inquiry surprised them by the disclosure of his Pelagian and Arian opinions. The council paused and withdrew, refusing their assistance; but Willard was ordained by another; a discussion in pamphlets ensued; and a third council, summoned by a minority of the church, advised them to withdraw, and become members of other churches. About the same time a council at Salisbury, in

New-Hampshire, condemned the Unitarianism of Thomas Worcester. As yet, however, not a single sermon had been preached in Massachusetts against the Trinity, except at King's Chapel. Not a single person, except Willard, had been settled after the avowal of his Unitarian doctrine. The General Repository, the Christian Monitor, a collection of tracts, which had been becoming more and more liberal, and the Christian Disciple, which had lately arisen with a tone of moderation, were the organs of a party that still moved on with cautious reserve, scarcely conscious of its own numbers. Already, the orthodox ministers of the State met in their local and general associations; but when, in 1814, a few of them proposed a plan of organization which, more than a century before, had been originally suggested, the effect was probably unfortunate. It was interpreted by their opponents as an attack on private freedom of conscience, and perhaps added something to the popular prejudice against all attempts to enforce, or even to urge, uniformity; and by a general consent it was in the end relinquished. But these were still the times which Greenwood has thus described: "When, in our religious world, there was nothing but distrust on the one side, and fear and evasion on the other; when the self-conceited theologian looked awry on the suspected heretic, and the object of his suspicion answered him with circumlocution and hesitation."

CHAPTER IX.

WITH the year 1815 came peace with Great Britain; and with the peace, came both the book of Belsham and public leisure for reflection. Three days before the commencement of the year, the granite walls of the new church in Summer-street were dedicated, in the words of Thacher, who preached and published a startling sermon, "to God, to the religion of his Son, who died for us, to the spirit of evangelical piety, charity, and truth." Before the echoes of this discourse had ceased, a small pamphlet fell from the press, with the title, "American Unitarianism." It was but a part of the Memoir of Lindsey, containing the letters of Wells and Freeman, without comment; except that extracts from the writings of Belsham were prefixed, illustrating his theology. The book had been obtained by Morse, who thus turned upon the Unitarian bands in America the artillery of their own allies. Vigorously was the assault pushed by the Panoplist, which, in a succession of able articles, charged on the liberal clergy that long suppression of their opinions, to which these letters gave certainly every aspect of design. But if there had been concealment, it was now at an end; and that can never be a bright page in the history of their cause in New England, which records that it was not their own hand that at last drew the veil

aside. Channing answered the Panoplist through a letter to Thacher, repelling with indignation the charge of unworthy concealment, avowing that his own worship and sentiments had been Unitarian, and declaring that he never supposed that his friends wished to be thought Trinitarians. While he contended that a majority of the liberal clergy "believed that Jesus Christ is more than man," he yet affirmed it to be "no crime to believe with Mr. Belsham." Samuel Worcester, of Salem, met the reply of Channing, and said that "it seemed to have been received as an established, uncontested fact, that ministers of the liberal class were not accustomed to be unreserved and explicit in the public avowal and declaration of their sentiments." There were three publications on each side, and a layman, the most active member of the corporation of Harvard College, threw in a pamphlet of personal invective, entitled, "Are you a Christian, or a Calvinist?" The controversy degenerated in its progress; but whether it were that —

"Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just,"—

Worcester proved himself no unequal antagonist, even to the great abilities of Channing.

It was a result of this discussion that the complete separation, which was plainly inevitable, came on without delay. The Unitarians avowed their doctrine from the pulpit; the Trinitarians drew together into a more compact phalanx. Every pastor was compelled to choose his place on one side or the other of the chasm. Whatever dis-

ruption of personal unanimity, or of parochial peace, might be the cost of an open decision, the time had come ; except when, here and there, some older divine, timid, or clinging to the ancient customs, preserved some forms of fellowship with the teachers of an opposite doctrine, there was an end of mutual exchanges and councils. Some lingered awhile upon the border, but the gulf was every day widening ; and while they yet looked across, the most moderate felt themselves borne backward.

There were, at that time, two hundred and ninety-three townships in Massachusetts ; and the Congregational parishes were somewhat more numerous. The churches that now avowed Unitarianism, or retained Unitarian pastors, often with loud protests against the name, lay almost all in the eastern part of the commonwealth. In Boston, only the Old South and the Park-street churches, adhered to the orthodox standard ; and from the latter, Griffin had just retired. The aged Lathrop, who died within a year after the explosion ; Freeman, whose colleague, Cary, died also in 1815, abroad ; Frothingham, just ordained over the First Church ; the Brattle-street church, which the retirement of Everett to a Cambridge professorship had left without a pastor ; Parkman, so lately the repudiator of the Unitarian name, and the Socinian doctrine, at least ; Thacher, already in the van ; Holley, brilliant, eloquent, once deemed an able champion of truth and piety, now the mere victim of a worldly and unprincipled vanity ; Lowell, who rejected least, and who would never permit him-

self to assume any other title than that of Christian, nor to be numbered with the party with whom he acted; and Channing, whose ardent sensibilities, a shining intellect, and a fluent pen, drew to the head of all;—these, in one body, transferred, with a single exception, the ancient churches of Boston to a system of religion, which would once have shut out every one of its professors from the communion of those very churches.

In the populous county of Middlesex, few of the older and more conspicuous congregations bowed at once to this mighty revolution of opinions. Three churches in Salem gave themselves up, after long preparation, to the liberal theology of their pastors. The separation in Salem was broad and deep, and Unitarianism had there a superiority which it could not sustain through the county of Essex. In Norfolk, several divines of influence brought much weight to the new theology; in Bristol, a smaller number were its advocates. The oldest church in New England, the very church of the pilgrims, had become decidedly Unitarian, under the ministry of Kendall. Of the Barnstable ministers, not less than six had been, in the first years of their ministry, of the liberal school, and had afterwards, as they professed, been brought to a nearer and more spiritual acquaintance with the gospel, and to a firm confession of the Trinity. The only Unitarian minister in the county, seems to have been Goodwin, of Sandwich; and there was not a single minister of that belief in the counties of Hampden and Berkshire. In number, there-

fore, the orthodox ministers and churches far exceeded their adversaries. The Unitarian ministers of Massachusetts, in 1815, can hardly have been more than seventy-five; the orthodox must have been more than two hundred. But the strength of the orthodox was less in their numbers than in the language of the Scriptures, in the testimony of the Christian church of all ages, in the consent of the fathers of New England, in their own missionary zeal, in the evident and transforming might of the gospel as it was preached by themselves, and in their appeal to the deepest hopes and fears of sinful humanity; an appeal to which the souls of men had always answered. Their weakness lay in those peculiar doctrines of Calvinism which, whether truths or errors, have never commanded the general assent of Christians, and have often created an intense prejudice; in the still more unfortunate burden of an inclination, too widely spread, for metaphysical subtleties, poor aliment of the heart, and in too great a contempt for the milder graces of style, of manner, and of character.

The strength of the Unitarian party was still vast, and not at all confined to the parishes where Unitarians ministered. They offered to man a religion which demanded from the understanding but a slight submission, and imposed no grievous task upon the army of the undecided. They taught and practised, amongst much that was lovely and of good report, a gentleness and an indulgence, not inconsistent with moral strictness of habit, yet exceedingly pleasing to the world. They

placed in their front a company of men, whose powers of mind were often distinguished, and whose cultivated taste either chastened a native eloquence, or else gave a graceful respectability to tameness of intellect and effeminate reasoning. They had the university, the school which was cherishing the future scholars and professional men of the commonwealth. They had an immense preponderance of the opulence and influence of the capital. They had the patronage of many of the ablest men in Massachusetts, whose judgment, had they been theologians, or persons of profound religious earnestness, might have wanted the authority which it possessed, of Parsons, Story, Parker, Dexter, Lowell, and Bowditch, and names not less distinguished, but not yet inscribed on sepulchral monuments. Their weakness was, that their system, with all its simplicity, had plainly originated from some other source, not from the language of the Scriptures, and did not meet the obvious meaning of the Scriptures; that it seldom attracted the more serious minds; that it bore little fruit; that it accustomed men to choose their religious belief by their feelings, and then to support it by irreverent, if not insincere interpretations; that, being in truth but the offspring of a spirit of doubt, it had within itself the germ of an unbelief, whose expansion could be checked by no determination of the present hour, or the present age.

The Unitarians, however, satisfied themselves, and assured mankind, that so resplendent a light had never before adorned and illustrated Christian-

ity. Perhaps it was a policy, that unconsciously mingled itself with their admiration and affection for their leaders. Perhaps it was because the chief seats of Unitarianism were a rich and refined city, somewhat proud of its refinement, and a neighboring university, the most ancient and the best endowed in the land. Perhaps it was in that charm which commonly plays around a novel and bold doctrine, and which has always magnified the abilities of those by whom established truth is discarded. Perhaps the scheme of a different, a more liberal, and a more cheerful religion did, indeed, for a time, enlist on its side an unusual glow of intellect. There was Channing, Holley, Everett — they lamented in Buckminster a mental and spiritual prodigy; every humbler name had its own honors. To accede to the cause of such wisdom, rescued the meanest powers from the reproach of blindness, of bigotry, and of lingering behind the great progress of “the race.” It seemed their opinion that, so soon as light should but approach, and fear depart, the theologians of all Christendom would glide into the delightful current as easily as the theologians of eastern Massachusetts. A higher philosophy, and a nobler moral sentiment, had now but to disclose themselves peacefully under the pure beams of a religion which would impose no intellectual restraint, and offend no intellectual prejudice.

In the midst of this opening scene, the Convention sermon of 1816, was preached by Channing. His theme was international peace, for which he

asked the support of the clergy, while they yet freshly felt the recent calamities of European and American war. He turned aside from the field of theological controversy, and seemed thus to plead for union on the high table-land of moral reformation. But to reap the anticipated harvests, there was need of many a sickle. The university prepared to augment the means of theological education. A society was formed, which became the foundation of the Faculty of Divinity. The younger Ware, whose writings were marked beyond those of his brethren, by a spirit of devotion, and of practical earnestness, now succeeded Lathrop at the Second church, while Griffin was followed at Park-street by a son of President Dwight. A second Universalist chapel arose, where the Trinity was also denied. The Recorder, a weekly newspaper of orthodox principles, was established at Boston. In the convention sermon of 1817, Hyde of Lee, descending from the western hills, to which Unitarianism had not penetrated, plainly pronounced those to be heretics, who denied the essential divinity of the Son of God and ranked him among created beings, super-angelical or human. Thacher, fleeing from clime to clime for health, died among strangers. His successor was Greenwood, a beautiful writer, and Palfrey occupied the pulpit of Brattle-street.

For a time, however, the two parties stood opposite to each other, almost in silence, each somewhat uncertain of the ground beneath its feet, and not anxious to aggravate the schism, whose gentlest

progress and issue could not but bring a wide and fearful distress. Only once, for several years, was that scene witnessed which afterwards was to be the familiar story of so many a village; a church and its parish torn asunder; a pastor placed over the fold from whom those sheep, who had promised to hear the voice of the chief Shepherd, fled, as from a hireling or a robber.

But in 1818, the fruitful question between churches and parishes arose once more, and slept not until the law of the land had pronounced a decision, which had the effects of an earthquake, except that they followed not at once from the general shock. It was the decision of the highest courts of law, that the majority of the parish, having elected their own religious teacher, conferred upon that portion of the communicants who remained with them, the only legal character in which a church could be recognized. The property of the church, even to the sacred vessels, and the records, was then at the disposal of the parish, so long as even two or three communicants were left behind; and even though all should fail, the right only remained in suspense till a new church should be organized.

Sorrowful and indignant, and oppressed with a sense of wrong, the orthodox body submitted to a determination, which, however just and unavoidable, yet sanctioned a boundless perversion of bequests from the sacred design of the givers. If they could not condemn the judges or the law, as indeed both were condemned by many, they were

yet compelled to detest and scorn the more a system of doctrine, or of denial, which could employ the votes of a mingled company, of whom scarcely any were earnest enough in religion to approach its distinguishing ordinances, and with these could wrench away all but freedom of conscience from those who only professed the belief of Christendom and of their fathers. But the issues of this decision remained to be felt, when the principle of doubt should have accomplished its riper development.

CHAPTER X.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY, "from turret to foundation-stone," was illuminated by the calm blaze of that rational religion, in whose light all distinctions of Christian doctrine faded away, like phosphorescent objects in the sunshine. At its head was Kirkland, affably benign, "stripping religion of its stiff and formal costume, its gloomy and forbidding looks, and its austere and repellant manners," the intimate friend of the Eliots, Gores, Smiths, McLeans, Perkinses, Thorndikes, Lymans, Parkmans, Boylstones, who poured out the treasures by which he gathered around him a cluster of shining

scholars in the inferior offices of the University. McKean, the professor of Rhetoric, who died in 1818, left no other among the instructors who could be charged with orthodoxy, and it was said that his place, although he could comply so far as to preach the sermon at the ordination of Frothingham, had not always been exempt from annoyance. The fellows and the elective overseers, were chiefly of the liberal churches of Boston and its neighborhood. Crowned with its ancient renown, enriched with princely magnificence, and adorned by elegant scholarship, the college gave lustre to the opinions which it now welcomed to its bosom, and over whose propagation it spread its maternal care. But scarcely a seventh of the pupils dedicated themselves to divinity, and scarcely a tenth to the divinity that reigned at Cambridge. In such a progress, centuries might be consumed before even the whole commonwealth should be enlightened. The Divinity School arose, to attract, as well as to interest; and if its first fruits were not numerous, yet the flower of some of the classes of Harvard, went forth to oppose in the pulpits of Massachusetts their free investigation, their philosophy of religion, their rhetorical grace, their soothing or animated elocution, and the flowers which they had culled from the fields of nature or of the Scriptures, to the honest interpretations, the downright argument, the urgent zeal, and the rigid sternness, now indeed learning to be less rigid, and less stern, of ancient orthodoxy. A brilliant promise attended them as they went, but even mightier

aid was given to the triumph of the principle in which Unitarianism had its origin, by the army of educated men who passed from Cambridge to the highest seats of life ; almost sure, whether they believed or not with their academic teachers, at least with them to disbelieve.

Opposite to the front of this mass of power, Holmes, who was the Convention preacher of 1819, maintained, with a modest steadfastness, the creed to which the pastoral pulpit of Cambridge had not yet proved itself untrue. But Ware, at the ordination of Lamson, had taught, with all the authority of his chair, that while "we are to consider the doctrines delivered by the apostles and primitive teachers, as given them by revelation, — the arguments, illustrations, and topics of persuasion which they employed to enforce them, were the suggestions of their own minds, in the exercise of their respective talents, and the kinds and degree of knowledge they possessed." To bear the same standard, or a bolder, to the western valley of the land, Holley, the most eminent pulpit orator of his day, now departed and left his place in Hollis-street, to the independence and poetic fervor of Pierpont. Southward, a society was formed at Baltimore, and placed itself under the charge of Jared Sparks, one of the most distinguished of the recent pupils of Cambridge. The sermon preached at his ordination, by Channing, seemed to their associates in belief to make an epoch in the history of Christianity. They affirmed, that except the preaching of Whitefield, it had produced "a more

extensive and powerful effect on the religious public than had ever been known in America." The absence of doctrine had been a striking feature in many of the earlier of the liberal preachers. A placid gentleness of style wafted the mind of the hearer along, without uneasiness or effort. Studiously was every theme avoided which could heavily task the intellect, or very deeply agitate the heart. A shrewd divine of that day not inaptly compared the mental state in which it reigned, with that state of the corporeal system in which the power of digesting strong and nutritious food has been lost. The ambitious eloquence of Everett or Holley might captivate the ear with any sentiment. Men of profounder feelings loved better the too chastised earnestness of Buckminster. The mass remained like polished marble beneath the gentle droppings of common Unitarianism. Channing had once perceived the appalling defect, and longed for a more ancient fervor. But once yielding to the tide of doubt, he not only dismissed the doctrines of the Trinity, of human corruption, and of the atonement, but seemed at length to be much warned by a stern prejudice which beheld in them the chief obstacles to the march of religious improvement. All the energy of his active and glowing intellect was thenceforth to be turned either to their overthrow, or to the propagation of such virtue and such piety, as could dispense with their support. Advancing in this path, he had seen himself compelled to assume the post of a foremost champion. With an eye for moral beauty every-

where, except where he was enslaved by one mighty antipathy; an engaging writer, but always leaving the objections of his antagonist unsatisfied; skilful in offering that side of his theme which won his own regard, while he threw a shadow over that which had been repulsive; egotistical, confident in his own powers, ignorant of mankind, and trusting to the most uncertain dreams of the future destinies of man on earth, and to the most vague conceptions of abstract goodness; he surrendered for these the impregnable rock of revelation. At length, his aversion became a fixed, daring, implacable hatred; nothing was too bold for his pen, or too relentless for his spirit, till, before the end of his course, the Christian minister seemed lost in the benevolent philosopher, in the teacher of high morals, in the man who reserved to himself the right of changing perpetually his decision on the very meaning of that religion to whose service he had been consecrated. When now he arose at Baltimore to declare the principles which were to be launched forth into a hostile community, he strengthened himself indeed with some aspect of scriptural argument. But he threw all hereditary reverence aside, and openly and ardently disclaimed, repelled, and almost ridiculed, what had ever been dearest to the heart of Christendom. On his journey, too, he preached at New York almost the first Unitarian sermon which had been heard in that great mart, and planted the seeds of a congregation.

Stuart, of Andover, a name already honored

with some wreaths from the walks of sacred literature, published letters to Channing, in reply to his sermon at Baltimore. Disclaiming somewhat ostentatiously all subjection to human authority, morbidly jealous of the rights of individual opinion, he rejected much of the language of the ancient church, and was not quite content with the creed of Nice. But solemnly, eloquently, earnestly, and with deep fervency of soul, he maintained the threefold distinction in the Godhead, the unequivocal deity of the Redeemer and the Comforter. Fresh from the writings of German neologists, he declared aloud that here, as there, the simple question between the parties must soon be, "whether natural or revealed religion is our guide and hope." The letters of Woods of Andover to Unitarians, of Ware to Trinitarians and Calvinists, and of Woods in reply, were the next chapter in the controversy. They appeared in 1820 and 1821, and embraced the whole field, but touched slightly the question of the divine nature, and more extensively the doctrines of depravity and redemption. The argument of Woods was cogent and skilful; the whole Unitarian system had a faithful representative, and was displayed in its most popular form; and the discussion was distinguished by its mildness and courtesy. Yet Woods forbore not to pronounce the system of Unitarianism to be another gospel.

The growth of Unitarianism, in the Middle States, was now repelled by a shield that had been often tried in polemic warfare. In the works of

Miller, the chief blemish is, that in his desire to perfect the triumph of his cause, he frames assertions that require, but do not receive, some qualifying limits. He is a general who sweeps across the field and claims an exterminating victory, while he fails to notice that at different points the hostile bands are rallying in the rear of his too confident pursuit. But his "Letters on Unitarianism," addressed to a Presbyterian Church in Baltimore, were a manly, energetic volume, which unsparingly overthrew and trampled down the system, and which must much and justly have moved the men of common intelligence and active habits, for whom especially it was written. A reply was published by Sparks, and Stuart also thought it needful to publish in 1822 his letters to Miller, in his own defence; for the Princeton professor had condemned his rash rejection of the ancient language and doctrine concerning the eternal generation of the Son.

So completely was the ancient college of Massachusetts wrested from the hands of those who inherited the principles of its founders, that they felt themselves compelled to lay new foundations. Williams College, though not abroad, was on a distant frontier, and therefore, under a kind of necessity, the institution at Amherst arose. It was a feature of the schism which was now entire, that it entered into the heart of almost all intelligent communities, at least on the eastern side of the Connecticut, and did not merely place parish against parish, but left no primitive parish without

an admixture of opposite elements. Where the pastor and a majority of the people had espoused the new doctrine, individuals were still found, whom education, family ties, or conscientious conviction, bound to that which it supplanted. Where the pastor and the church adhered to their faith, the unity of the neighborhood was still broken. Some clergymen at no great distance, was known to give a milder and broader interpretation of his message. The liberal publications made their way to many households. Here and there one of those peculiar minds that delight in being wiser and bolder than the rest; here and there a subtle thinker, or a man who held it praise enough to believe with the great men of the courts and capital; here and there a representative, who, lingering through his winter weeks at Boston, had drunk in the accents of Channing or of Greenwood; here and there a recent son of Harvard, with his academic sense of superiority to superstition; here and there a speaker, skilled to declaim against the mental slavery of creeds and confessions; scattered throughout the country, and planted in almost every parish, were these nuclei of resistance to orthodoxy. Around them gathered such as could not endure the severity of a doctrine by which they were condemned; such as believed themselves in no need of serious repentance; such as only turned aside from the world on Sundays to keep the customs of their fathers; and such as, doubting the whole religion, would naturally prefer to listen to a system which had the least to be doubted. Thus

it was that in the councils of the State the liberal doctrine had far more than its proportion of representatives, and for four years the college of Amherst acted without incorporation. The Convention sermon of 1822 was preached, however, by Moore, its first president, and contained an acknowledgment of the Trinity. But more disastrous by far was the disunion of parishes, when an aged pastor slept with his predecessors, or when some imprudence had given offence, or finally, when the doubters felt their own strength to be sufficient for a revolution. Occasions could not be wanting; and while the Unitarians courted, and the orthodox refused, the offices of brotherly fellowship, it was easy to establish a prepossession in favor of the more liberal side. Few were the believers in the system of the Unitarian theologians. But many were there whose belief in any system was but the most indistinct and general. Few loved, or cared to hear the Unitarian arguments from the pulpit, but many disliked yet more the orthodox anathema. When the hour of choice came on, and previous strife had added a hundred incidental irritations, it is not strange that neighbors and brethren so often broke away, and that the village street that divided two houses of Congregational worship became, for all the ends of religious separation, a gulf as wide and as deep as the ocean.

CHAPTER XI.

A SERMON preached at Worcester, by Beecher, whose robust, unpolished strength now towered upward among the orthodox clergy of New England, carried on the thread of discussion till the establishment, in 1824, of the "Christian Examiner," on the grave of the less fitly designated "Christian Disciple." The Examiner became the chief and the able organ of those doctrines for whose promulgation it was destined and designed to labor with the spirit that be seemed its title. It leaned upon the Baltimore sermon of Channing, and reproached the orthodox for the separation which eight years had now decided. But its first volume contained a report of the "Massachusetts Evangelical Society," a Unitarian body; a report which was plainly intended to be a landmark, which might either bound encroachment, or demonstrate the falsehood of the charge of encroachment. It thus protected against the progress of that mode of thinking which delights to represent "a God all mercy."

"The prevalence," it said, "of the modern sect of Universalists, who deny the doctrine of a future retribution, and who do not consider a pious and holy life essential to happiness hereafter, is particularly alarming, and calls for the special notice of

all serious Christians. We think this system to be most injurious to the interests of good morals, and to the welfare of civil society, as well as fatally dangerous to the souls of men, and we believe it directly contrary to the plainest declarations of the holy gospel." The clerical trustees, whose signatures were affixed to this document, were Baneroff, Thayer, Foster, Lowell, Pierce, Kendall, Parkman, Ripley and Ware. It had the fate of many other landmarks, and remains to denote the period and the men.

In 1825, the American Unitarian Association was formed for the concentration of Unitarian efforts and the propagation of Unitarian sentiments through books, and tracts, and missionaries. There were, indeed, grave questions which might have been expected to divide those efforts, as they certainly separated those sentiments. There was a higher and a lower class of Unitarians, and still beyond these a highest and a lowest. But it was calmly announced that, concerning these lowest doctrines, "those who agreed in the great point of the simple unity of God, differed, and should differ in peace." Only the phrase "the eternal Son of God," was unscriptural and absurd: every thing else might claim an undisturbed tolerance. In its first year, the Christian Examiner announced to the world that he believed enough who believed no more than the humanity of Jesus Christ, who denied the existence of the devil, and who deemed the allusions of the New Testament to evil spirits to be a mere indulgence of the language of popular superstition.

But in the next year, a new editor lifted his anchor and boldly swung forth into a sea of perpetual uncertainty. He declared that the publication, in its several shapes, had "advocated no doctrines and been conducted on no principles, which forbade making a change, whenever a change should appear to be an improvement." Its religion was henceforth to be known, not merely as "liberal," but pre-eminently as "rational." The sacraments were carefully stripped of all sanctity beyond that which belongs to common worship. It gave to the Scriptures "their own station, which was a high one among the oracles of sacred instruction." It is said that "the Comforter that Jesus promised, and God sent down, is Truth." It calmly stated that "the character of Jesus has many traits of surpassing excellence;" it also felt no particular friendship or partiality for Socinianism, and even thought it "an unscriptural doctrine." More loud and earnest was its warning against all claims of ministerial authority, which might bar the progress of free inquiry.

"To all beside, indifferent, easy, cold,
Here the fire kindled, and the wo was told."

At this period the Unitarian congregations in the United States, apart from Massachusetts, were said by a writer in the Examiner, to be no more than one flourishing congregation at Portland, and two or three others, small and unimportant, in Maine; one large society at Portsmouth, and here and

there a small one, as at Keene, and Amherst, in New Hampshire ; one at Burlington, in Vermont ; one in Rhode Island ; a small one in Connecticut ; one in New York ; five or six small ones in Pennsylvania ; one at Baltimore, only able by borrowing money to save its church from the hammer ; one in the District of Columbia, and one in South Carolina. The same writer avowed that in Massachusetts " Unitarianism was not heartily and intelligently embraced by one half of the Unitarian societies, nor by one third of the members of the other half ;" that " the ministers must seldom preach to them liberal doctrine," as they were " resolved not to be Trinitarians," but were not resolved what they were, nor what they ought to be in the way of doctrine." In such a survey he found a defence against the charge of coldness to missionary labors.

The conversion of an East Indian missionary to Unitarianism, and of the celebrated Ramohun Roy to something that could be mistaken for Unitarianism, had lighted up a glimmer of interest which issued in a correspondence.

Divinity Hall, at Cambridge, was erected in 1826, and dedicated, as it was expressed in the discourse of Channing, " to free inquiry, to the love of truth, to religious feeling, to faith in the glorious issues of Christianity, to the improvement of the ministry, to Christian independence, and to the spirit of martyrdom." It was time, indeed, that the ancient phraseology on such occasions should give place to a more abstract language. The chief

professor in that seminary had expressly assumed the Unitarian name, and disclaimed the atonement, except through the regenerating power of the gospel, and the influence of the instruction and example of Jesus. Channing himself, in a discourse which he pronounced also in 1826, at the dedication of a second place of worship for his brethren in New York, had poured out his whole power of invective and ridicule against doctrines which were the dearest treasures of almost every worshipper in the great metropolis.

In 1827, the Convention sermon on ecclesiastical peace, was preached by Abbot of Beverly, a conciliating divine of the liberal opinions. Till now the two parties in the convention had tacitly permitted to each other the alternate selection of the preacher. The Trinitarians now determined to assert the right of the majority, and to follow the manly and obvious rule of voting for none, and of voting against all, except such as would preach the doctrines in which they recognized "the power of God unto salvation."

The Christian Examiner of 1827, was content to acknowledge that its editors "thought they should prefer to the speculations of the infidel theologians of Germany, even Calvinism itself, in a mitigated state, though they might hesitate about some of the more odious and mischievous forms, in which it had lately appeared." It acquiesced in the reasoning that "to worship Christ as God, was to deny him," one of the shameless absurdities of Whitman of Waltham; and in the statement which the life

of Norton was given to sustain, that the New Testament was not a revelation, but the history of a revelation. The most powerful and popular arguments, however, were still aimed at distorted pictures of Calvinism, for which the most grim of ancient Calvinists hardly furnished an outline. If the resemblance was denied, it was said that orthodoxy had changed its features, and was preparing to attach itself to the triumph of rational religion. But not the less was the picture assailed with triumphant indignation.

Channing in the noonday of his renown, Pierpont with his air of undaunted frankness, and Dewey with that eloquence which could invest with "a glory and a glow" sentiments the most earthly and frivolous; all denounced the Calvinistic system as ascribing to the Maker of mankind acts which would dishonor the throne of a human tyrant. It was no preference for abstract Unitarianism, that reconciled men to the surrender of all which it denied. But one writer thus clothed the opposite doctrine with the most revolting and terrific aspect. Another spread out a charming landscape in contrast, embracing all which is lovely and of good report, without one stern passage of the pilgrimage. Another hastened to allow the claims of all worldly business, and the innocence of all worldly pleasures within the limits imposed by a moderate temper, and a wise regard to personal interest. Another had not a severe word for any opinion, and owned that he might himself be in error on any topic, however momentous might

seem the necessity of truth. It would have been wonderful if the undecided, the indifferent, the inexperienced, the prosperous, the light-hearted, all who were as far as possible from being weary and heavy laden, had not been swayed like the trees in the wind. To such, and to those who honestly abhorred the Calvinistic creed, and knew no other, were now added a company of speculative minds, that went forth, like the raven from the ark, over the ocean of free inquiry, and too often, like the raven, returned no more.

CHAPTER XII.

UNITARIANISM, viewed as the doctrine of a Christian sect, had now uttered its voice. Men had heard that it mattered not to their hope or love, whether Jesus were but the son of Joseph, or one higher than archangels; that the ancient belief in the Trinity was absurd and polytheistic; that the popular conception of the atonement was to be boldly compared with all things horrid, detestable, and degrading; that human nature needed nothing but encouragement for the developement within itself of all which is noble and divine; that "the Holy Spirit is a divine assistance accordant with the

fundamental truth that virtue is the mind's own work," and that the word "hell," by a perverted and exaggerated use, had done unspeakable injury to Christianity.

The bonds of fellowship with the body of Christians of the present age, as well as of all former days, were sundered. There was no respect for modern creeds; no reverence for the belief or example of antiquity. The terror of authority was now at an end. All were free, and Calvinism could no longer embitter the enjoyments of life, except for those who chose to put on its fetters. Then the merits of the substitute began to claim attention. When the negative warfare had been pushed as far as could consist with any possible construction of the Scriptures, it remained to be seen whether the spirit of doubt would acknowledge such a limit, and on the other side, whether the human heart, craving "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unscen," could be also satisfied.

For some local or accidental cause, the parish of Charlton, in 1827 or 1828, fixed their eyes upon Edward Turner, who was engaged in the propagation of Universalism in another region of New England. He accepted their summons to become their minister; the attending council, composed of eight Unitarian ministers, Bancroft, Allen of Northborough, Walker, Huntoon, Thompson, May, and Osgood of Sterling, proposed no question concerning his faith; and as the Universalists had generally discarded the sacraments, he received

baptism from the hands of Bancroft on the very day of his installation. Through the Universalist journals he announced that no change had occurred in his opinions; and that he still labored for the same ends in the same spirit. At the same time, a not unmeaning union of two journals of the more popular class, furnished a wider token of progress. The "Christian Inquirer" was a Unitarian paper, published by Barnabas Bates, who had been a Baptist minister, and afterwards achieved some notoriety in politics. The "Olive Branch" was a Universalist paper of Abner Kneeland, who was, a few years later, a convicted blasphemer and an avowed Atheist. These two journals became one in 1828; and the first number after their union declared that "the great mass of Unitarians, both in this country and in Europe, boldly avowed their disbelief of eternal misery, and their firm persuasion of the restoration of mankind to holiness and happiness." There was no longer a bulwark between the Unitarians of Massachusetts and that portion, at least of the Universalist body, who denied only the eternity of retribution; and these were not known to the world as distinct from that great mass who refused all thoughts of an account hereafter.

But this vicinity was perilous; and there were Unitarians who had not consented that Bates or Turner should be their representative. To such the more adventurous answered that the common cause was not pledged by the language or the inquiries of individuals. A meeting-house had been

built in Boston by some of the admirers of Holley ; and he was on his return from the south-west, when a tropical fever smote him, and he was buried in the deep. Motte, a graduate of Cambridge, who had received Episcopal orders, but afterwards embraced the Unitarian system, became their pastor ; and the sermon at his ordination was preached by Channing. But he spoke not now as at Baltimore. " I am no organ of a sect," he said, " but speak for myself alone ; " " what other men believe, is to me of little moment ; " and, " were the name of Unitarian more honored, I should be glad to throw it off." In another ordination sermon of his, preached also in 1828, the first person singular of the personal pronoun was employed about a hundred and forty times ; and this little trait of many Unitarian discourses disclosed the character which they now assumed ; the character of individual speculations on man, on virtue, on religion, and on the prospects of " the race." Lowell, whose attitude, indeed, had always been the same, avowed that he " neither took the name, nor belonged to the party of those who designated themselves as Unitarians ; he preached of the Saviour as " an inconceivably exalted Being," who " humbled himself, that by his obedience and death he might make propitiation for the sins of mankind ; " and he admitted, it was said, the eternity of punishment. But the " Unitarian Advocate " was established by Sewall, in the Humanitarian cause ; and the Socinian exposition of Kenrick was republished. Pierpont regarded the resurrection of the

body as a doctrine never taught by Christ, and not at all demonstrated by his own resurrection; and would not oppose prayers for the intercession of saints, nor for the departed, good or evil. The correspondents of the *Christian Examiner* interpreted the judgment as entirely internal; the last day as the close of life; and the resurrection as "the instant event, by which man, as soon as he passes from the body, enters the undisguised presence of God." They contended against the abuses of attributing too much to the prayers of ministers, or to public prayers and preaching at all; and against all superstitious and mystical conceptions of the value of the Lord's supper. "As often," said they, whether intending a paraphrase or an improvement of the words of St. Paul, "as often as we eat the bread and drink the cup, let us show forth, with all affection and humility, the remembrance of Christ; and let us ever show forth the same remembrance, by the imitation of his virtues." The reasoning of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which was denied to Paul, "could not," it was said, in the same pages, "be regarded as of any force by an intelligent reader of the present day;" even the reasoning of Paul would "not always bear a philosophical scrutiny;" the evangelists were "themselves allegorists," and had but "reported the words of Christ from memory, and that not always with perfect accuracy."

In 1827, Gilman had ventured to say of the United States, that "for every single individual who abandoned Unitarianism, it was an undeniable fact

that more than one whole congregation acceded to the system; and which," he added, "I see and feel, will be the proportion of its progress to that of its decline, for centuries to come." Many a parish, indeed, was distracted by long and successful measures, designed to wring from the orthodox pastors the relinquishment of their pulpits. But scenes like these could only purify the orthodox cause, and give intensity, clearness and directness to its resistance. The "Spirit of the Pilgrims" was a monthly journal, which arose, armed for the contest; and so vigorous and timely were its blows, that the joints in the armor of Unitarianism were exposed, and every vulnerable part lay bare and bleeding.

The Unitarians were not unwilling that the ardor of the last few years should abate; Frothingham published in a sermon "A Plea against Religious Controversy;" Lowell, in another, insisted that "The Clergy, and not Religion, was the Source of Division and Strife in the Christian Church;" even Dewey printed a discourse on sectarianism; and a writer with the title of "Old Experience" prefixed to a pamphlet, on "The Final Tendency of the Religious Disputes of the Present Day," the quaint motto, "There came a Viper out of the Heat." An unsuccessful attempt was made by Palfrey to introduce an English Bible corrected by the text of Griesbach; which would have excluded from the popular ear the disputed passage in the first epistle of St. John. The annotations of Dabney removed the pre-existence of the Saviour;

the separate existence of the soul ; its life between death and the resurrection ; the devil, " an allegorical personage, the supposed cause of all evil ;" the punishment of the wicked ; the angels ; and the great judgment. Norton distinctly stated that if a philosopher like Cicero had been convinced that Christ was a messenger from God, and had carefully collected and committed to writing all the information which he could procure concerning him subjoining his own explanations and remarks, " the work of such a writer would, as far as we can judge, have been of at least equal value with any book which remains to us of the New Testament." The Christian Examiner denied that the epistle to the Hebrews was in any sense canonical, affirming that the author, unable to " distinguish clearly between realities and figures," had quite mistaken the manner in which Jesus " sacrificed himself in the cause of God and mankind." It described the Apocalypse as a kind of glorious poem, expressing " the approaching advent of Christ, and the triumph of his religion," and " not prophetic of any particular transaction ;" and regarded the question, whether it was the work of the apostle John as " one of the nicest in sacred criticism." On behalf of the body of Unitarians, it disclaimed Universalism ; yet supposed that future punishments " must be corrective incentives to repentance and reform ;" " every one receiving as much enjoyment or pain, and for such a length of time, as he deserves and needs for his moral improvement." It gloried in the belief that religious truth could not be station-

ary, and wished that the orthodox might but withhold the disputed doctrines from their children till the age of mature judgment. For, "it looked upon the Calvinistic doctrine of hell-torments," especially, "as, beyond all question, the most horrible dogma ever conceived or uttered by man;" and, in a like spirit, Upham of Salem, alluding to the fathers of New England, said, that "there was a purity and sublimity in the religion of the untaught Indian, which could not but have exerted a corrective and restraining influence upon the complicated and gloomy doctrines towards which Christians were then inclined."

When the younger Ware was called, in 1830, to the chair of pastoral theology at Cambridge, he was succeeded in the Second Church by Ralph Waldo Emerson, the son of that Emerson, who, at the head of the First Church, had heralded the dawn of Unitarianism. In genius and splendor of thought, the son outstripped the father; and as far as the father had advanced before his orthodox progenitors, so far his simple denial of orthodoxy was succeeded by the audacious speculations of his son. The *Christian Examiner* of 1830 lamented the injudicious use of the Old Testament; "did not hesitate to say that many professed Christians have nothing but the Hebrew religion;" and would have it read as containing the record of the Hebrew, not the Christian faith, and fix the reverence of men as strongly as possible upon the gospels, as the great treasury of our religion." The energy with which the

champions of orthodoxy had charged upon the Unitarians their departure from the faith of their fathers, had struggled as for religion itself against its adversaries, had questioned the legal decision which deprived many of their churches of corporate rights, and had at length alluded to the political claim which their numbers might urge, was the occasion of fresh alarm. Year after year, the learned and lucid, but too ardent Story, had appeared at the meetings of the Unitarian Association, and had a little tarnished the dignity of his ermine, while he contended there for religious liberty, as if it were menaced by a giant enemy. The chief-justice of Massachusetts, too, had sustained, as was believed, his own decision through the pages of a Unitarian publication. Stung by such opposition, Cooke, an orthodox minister of some fire, ventured to draw the eyes of the community to the immense influence in political affairs which had been yielded to the Unitarian minority; and his words were not uttered in heedless ears. A more commanding advocate appeared, when Stuart addressed to Channing an indignant letter on religious liberty, throwing back the flood of popular innovation and invective. Whitman was forward to present an answer, into which he had gathered the scandal of villages and towns, with little discrimination or delicacy. It could not be hoped, however, that the liberal conception of religious freedom could be satisfied, till the orthodox should yield their consent to a fraternal intercourse, which would have been but a falsehood in action.

The Divinity School at Cambridge was, in 1830, reorganized; for the Society for the Promotion of Theological Education resigned all its authority to the corporation. Codman and a few others opposed the statutes which so effectually engrafted a faculty of Unitarian divinity upon the university, but they prevailed by a vote of thirty-four to twelve.

It was a perfectly consistent reference, and yet it was startling to hear from the Christian Examiner in 1831, that if the Trinitarian doxology were "not used by sincere and pious men, it would seem to Unitarian ears very like blasphemy and polytheism. Against the argument of Joanna Baillie, herself an Arian, it maintained the slightness of the difference between the Arian and the Humanitarian." At this time, Gannett began to edit the "Scriptural Interpreter," and would gladly have stayed that boldness in which the spirit of doubt now walked abroad. Leaning as far towards the substance of the orthodox hope as his hereditary belief would permit, and often employing the language which was most familiar to serious minds, the younger Ware published a work on the Christian Character, which ran rapidly through several editions. It was reviewed by Adams, in "Remarks on the Unitarian Belief;" but the wide welcome by which it was met was a token of the deep longing of many hearts for something more real than negations, and more inward than an undistinguishing liberality. All over the land, not seldom amidst strange and revolting scenes of fanaticism, the fires

of spiritual religion had been rekindled upon thousands of altars. Men asked for a faith which might relieve the guilty conscience, and afford the substantial assurance of peace beyond the grave. The old Christianity, if it had its wonders, had them because it spoke of such things as without it would never have become the possession of the intellect. The new Christianity, which labored to throw aside all wonders, issued in the profoundest poverty, exacting little from faith, but bestowing less in return. Its arguments had more often fixed an impression that the opposite doctrines were unreasonable, than a conviction that they were unscriptural. Minds aroused to a solemn earnestness, and turning to the word of God, often shook off at once the prejudices of years, and submitted without hesitation to a system which, at a more heedless period, they had been willing to disclaim. Common sense revolted at the manner in which the Scriptures were now compelled to speak or to be silent. The imagination felt itself imprisoned within a religion of cold and barren generalities. The heart panted to see once more the reconciling cross, and the incarnate God. Gannett and Ware, and other virtuous men, endeavored to answer to these wants as well as they might; but the internal power of Unitarianism was found to be insufficient to bind those together whom chance, rather than choice, had made its adherents. The Trinitarian congregations swelled while the Unitarian congregations decayed; and those whom they lost were commonly amongst the more earnest of their members. There remained a

diminished number of devout persons, who had never embraced the system, but were not persuaded nor were not able, to leave the ancestral temples; a company of such as conscientiously doubted the exact truth of orthodoxy, but wished to cling to the Scriptures; a few who delighted in bold and fanciful speculations, and had little reverence for the written word; a multitude whose minds were afloat on the billows of conjecture; and a mass of quiet worldliness, which moved on without desiring any other faith than that which tasked least the mind and the life, and yet promised "*denique cælum.*"

CHAPTER XIII.

A NOBLE victim was he upon whom the genius of doubt now alighted, bearing him aloft as with the talons of an eagle. Ralph Waldo Emerson was the lover of nature, of thought, of beauty, and of all life. His style is the pellucid brook that glides and ripples and smiles

"Through wood and mead, through shade and sun."

The doctrines of revelation had long since been degraded from their supremacy; the revelation it-

self had of late been cast forth as a prey to insincere criticism or to eclectic speculation. Great doctors of Unitarianism had sought in the human heart the standard by which all scriptural disclosures should be tried; had taught that it was but needful to educate and develope the greatness of that inborn image of divinity in man, which is truth; that he could be essentially what Jesus was; and that this divine image, in every human being, good or evil, was worthy of infinite reverence, of such reverence in kind, if not in degree, as Unitarianism paid to the Son of God. Emerson, a Platonist, gave himself to this inward religion, and cherished this divinity of humanity; till the outward gospel, with its doctrines and its ordinances, seemed a perishing tabernacle, ready to fall around the rising spirit. It had been the endeavor of others to abrogate all the special honor and importance of the sacraments. They were represented as no more than other acts of public worship; the gate to the sanctuary was thrown open as wide as the gate of the outer court; they were but significant rites, and indeed had now parted with most of their significance; and still the people came not. Beyond a doubt, in the judgment of Emerson, their purpose had ceased; and he now proposed to his congregation to drop the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The Second Church in Boston was unprepared for this; and its pastor, abandoning his office, preserved his integrity. He relinquished Christianity for his world of dreams; made the transcendental philosophy undeservedly odious

by his unbelief, as it was made unjustly ridiculous by a company of idle, half-thinking followers; and after a few years was the brilliant teacher of a vast and wicked pantheism.

The Unitarian pastors were alarmed; and the Unitarian publications strove to rebuild, and rallied to what remained of scriptural belief. In the pages of the *Christian Examiner*, Priestly and Belsham were sacrificed, as having accomplished their mission, and not at all representing the present Unitarianism of America or of England. The Universalist denial of all retribution was again attacked, even by Whitman, and disclaimed by the *Examiner*, which even threw out a few words to tell that the religion of the Old Testament was not wholly without authority. Orthodoxy, in the meanwhile, was in peril from its old disease, the inclination to hard and captious metaphysics. Like a millstone or a palsy, the strife between Taylor of New Haven, and his opponents, weighed down their common cause; and while grave theologians disputed on the philosophy of a revival, men slept, as sleep they must, amidst such discussions. "The Spirit of the Pilgrims" died; the division took a corporeal shape in Connecticut; clouds gathered in the south, and around the head of Beecher at Cincinnati; and Unitarianism pursued its way. Norton published, in 1833, his "Statement of reasons for not believing the doctrines of Trinitarians." "It would no doubt occur," he said, "to thinking men as an objection to a publication of this sort, that the doctrine of the Trinity was now to be

numbered among exploded errors; that it was, in truth, altogether an obsolete doctrine." But in offering so amazing a statement, he as plainly severed himself from the society of theologians, from the fellowship of Christians, and from the tribunal of the Scriptures. For, it was "to the great body of enlightened individuals in all countries, to the generality of those who on every subject but theology are the guides of public opinions," that he deemed it so "incongruous to address an argument against the Trinity;" it was, he owned, "still the professed faith of every established church, and of every sect which made a creed its bond of communion;" and he maintained that as the facts were essentially incredible, no evidence could be sufficient. Evidence, indeed, would have been idle with one who supposed that the apostles had mistaken the very promise of the second coming of their Lord; who allowed no supernatural influence, preserving them from error; who said that "supposing that Thomas had believed and asserted that his Master was God himself," in the presence and with the approving benediction of that Master, "there would be little reason for relying upon his opinion as infallible." A writer in the *Christian Examiner* of 1834, as if in mockery of all confidence in the scriptural narrative, attempted to exclude angels from the history of the resurrection. He made his conjectures, that the soldiers saw "the illustrious Author of our religion," clothed in the white habiliments of the tomb, after his resurrection, and reported that they had seen an

angel; that he was also the person seen by the women, and that they imagined the white cloth which he had thrown aside, to be another; that the two angels, at the head and the feet, where the body had lain, were the two parts of the dress; and that Jesus found and put on the clothes of the gardener, which caused the error of Mary Magdalene. Another succession of articles assailed the authority of Moses and the prophets. Of the fall they said, "it may be that facts were the materials out of which Moses formed his pictures;" "a serpent may have eaten of the apple;" but the condemnation of the serpent was deemed but "an embellishment of the style." They relinquished all prophecies of a Messiah, and held the interpretations of the apostles to be erroneous. "That Jesus was the Messiah," they calmly said, "in the sense in which he claimed to be so, we are far from disputing;" but "the language of the prophets, in the sense which we have reason to suppose that they assigned to it, gives us no intimations of a suffering, dying Messiah, or one who should rise from the dead, and no clear and proper predictions, which were fulfilled in Jesus personally." With a confidence which seemed as if it would build a tower to heaven, they said, "we deny not only that there are three persons in the Godhead, and but one God, but we deny entirely the possibility of such a thing." For such antagonists it was in vain that Winslow should write his discourses on the Trinity, and it would have been in vain that an apostle or an angel should have

written. Cheever wrote also, and with a pen of fire; with bold directness and solemn denunciation; and Withington, in the *Literary and Theological Review*, with admirable keenness exposed the religious barrenness and vacancy, left by all the speculative eloquence of Channing.

Amidst all the progress of the liberal doctrine, its more earnest adherents could not but feel that it was neither becoming the religion of the mass, nor even securing for itself a lasting establishment; that neither for the many nor for the few had it reared that structure of enlightened and practical Christianity, whose foundations it had long since laid with anticipations so triumphant. The orthodox parishes were still far more numerous, and far more zealous. Sects had penetrated to all the more populous spots; and, when the attachment to the hereditary place of worship was once supplanted, the cool and refined Unitarian could not well maintain the contest, among plain men, against the glowing Methodist on one side, or the downright Universalist on the other. The suspicion, too, which once, when it withheld the Christian name, or spoke of secret infidelity, had been thrown back with an indignation which the public mind might have approved, now had but too apparent a sanction from the writings and career of individuals. It was well remembered that Unitarianism had found entrance, not by open attacks on the doctrine of the Trinity, but silently, after the authority of creeds and confessions had been shaken. It was now asked whether Deism might

not enter by the same path, not openly attacking the divine mission of Christ, but gliding quietly even into the pulpit, and into the chair of the professor, after the authority of the Scriptures had been overthrown. There was no libel in the question ; such had been the victory of doubt in other lands ; and no man could deny that it was a natural and easy issue. Amongst the Unitarians there were those who perceived that they could not long preserve the character of a Christian sect, except they should rally firmly around some positive truths, and either recall or renounce their more adventurous companions. The *Christian Examiner* of 1835, strove to resume the tone of the believer ; and some of its writers delineated the Unitarian doctrine as only what no doubt it was in the minds of many of the Unitarian congregations, a refusal to acquiesce in the orthodox assertions of the absolute deity of the Son, the personality of the Holy Ghost, the inborn corruption of nature, and the substitution in the atonement. But all who united in denying the Trinity were still but one body ; and the principle of doubt was the moving impulse from the beginning. A strong swimmer may resist the current, and even gain the land, but the river sweeps on.

More and more clearly, in the sight of the watchful observer, the Unitarian party mingled within itself three classes, bound together only by the tie of a common unbelief ; and the continuance of their union was a proof that this unbelief was no less than the original soul of the party. The first

class was composed of men who seriously relied on the facts of the gospel, on the general authority of the Bible, and on the full reality of a divine revelation; but so interpreted all as to escape the doctrines which their reason persuaded them to reject. The second class denied the orthodox doctrines, but leaned firmly on nothing; the abler, opening their minds to light from every side, the feeblers following the abler; while no book of the Scriptures, no conception of inspiration, no truth of the Apostles' Creed, was deemed secure amidst the progress of unchecked inquiry. The third class only adhered to Unitarian Christianity, as it was that Christianity which demanded least; and adhered to Christianity at all, only as to the holiest of all the forms, in which "the divinity within" had clothed itself; a milder Judaism, a purer Mahometanism, a more religious Platonism. The third class now relinquished the miracles of the Scriptures; many of the second knew not which to sustain, and which to abandon; while the first frowned, but frowned gently and fraternally. Dewey, who seemed to hover where the first lost itself in the second, directed the Dudleian Lecture, which he preached in 1836, against the opinion of those who supposed a presumption against miracles. The articles in the *Christian Examiner* now bore the initials of their writers; and Ripley contended through its pages that miracles, which he did not deny, were yet not a support on which religion could rely; affirming that the miracles recorded in the Bible were not wrought as testimo-

nies to truth, but as incentives to action. His conception of the apostles, too, was that they only possessed in a larger measure, "the spontaneous inspiration of the Spirit."

The Unitarian doctrine shut out its professors from fellowship with other religious bodies in the propagation of the gospel. They were too few to attempt alone any extended missions; and their view of the natural state of mankind was not such as to awaken zealous efforts and sacrifices for the heathen. Even in their pulpit discourses, the almost entire absence of doctrine, and the want of confidence in the statements of the Scriptures, left a barrenness which fine writing, or eloquence, or sensibility, could hardly make fruitful. To vary the tediousness of the desk, more animating topics, even though somewhat secular, were presented; and the age produced an order of philanthropic movements, in which the ardor for good deeds could be satisfied, without the assertion of one or another religious sentiment. Channing was the philosopher of peace, and the prophetic arbiter in the great moral question which agitated the republic. Pierpont threw himself into the forlorn hope of the onset for temperance; and with a gallant rashness inflamed against himself half of a congregation, whose craft was supposed to be in danger. May was a leader in that host of many banners, which marched against southern slavery. Unitarians gave their patronage to the improvement of the long neglected mariner; Unitarians were foremost in lectures and lyceums; Unitarians planted

elegant cemeteries; Unitarians pitied the blind, the deaf, the maniac, and the prisoner, not more indeed than they were pitied by Christians who had creeds, but with a compassion which, because it was confined to temporal sufferings, seemed there the more radiant and generous.

In 1837, the translation of the Prophets, by Noyes of Petersham, was completed, a work of more ambition than ability; discussing the style of the Old Testament with the irreverence of an unbelieving critic, and so explaining the predictions that the testimony of Jesus should not be the spirit of prophecy. The treatise of Norton on the Genuineness of the Gospels, the fruit of many years and great learning, began also to appear, volume by volume. It threw aside the first two chapters of Matthew; yet seemed to admit the miraculous conception, but not the pre-existence of Christ; described the first two chapters of Luke as having "a fabulous hue;" spoke of miracles and fictions as blended in the narrative, of the errors of Mark and the mistakes of Luke; rejected the accounts of the repentance and suicide of Judas, of the resurrection of the saints at Jerusalem, and of the woman taken in adultery; suspected the mention of the angel that strengthened Christ in his agony, and the conclusion of the gospel of John; and then ably maintained the genuineness of the residue, as the narratives of just, honest, and credible, but by no means inspired writers. Furness also of Philadelphia produced a book on the Four Gospels, which he chose afterwards to name "Jesus and his

Biographers." Ripley addressed to doubters, Discourses on the Philosophy of Religion. Follen, too, that admirable German, who adorned his adopted land by his genius and his benevolence, wrote on religion and the church; and a very remarkable star shot up the horizon of letters. This was Orestes A. Brownson, who, having once been a minister, had become an unbeliever; had been recalled by the writings of Channing, and re-entered the pulpit, with scarcely any other doctrine, as he declared at a later period, than those of "the divinity of humanity, and the brotherhood of the race;" and had now commenced that strange succession of transitions in which he passed, always startling mankind, always complaining that he was misunderstood, always bold, logical, indefatigable, down to the surrender of his office, and even to a fierce assault upon the church and the priesthood, and then upward, step by step, to a kind of orthodoxy and to the bosom of the Church of Rome. He now issued his *New Views of Christianity, Society and the Church*, which were followed, from time to time, by other new views, till he required a quarterly publication of his own, to be the chronicle of his progress.

CHAPTER XIV.

So proudly pantheistic was the transcendentalism of which Emerson was the head, and Ripley no timid representative, that the younger Ware prepared a sermon for the College Chapel, on the Personality of the Deity; which was printed by the request of the students in divinity. It was probably the first occasion since the apostles separated at Jerusalem, on which an argument on such a topic had been offered as a Christian sermon. The school, with its mysticism, was not daunted; and in 1839, Norton appeared as its opponent; appeared, with a distinctness and a vehemence which told how one may be willing to die in the last ditch who has himself abandoned every other defence, and there or nowhere must fight valiantly. The title of his discourse was "The Latest Form of Infidelity." It drew from Ripley a copious reply, to which Norton added a rejoinder. The Unitarian cause could not, without seeming injustice, disown the offspring which it had borne and nourished; nor could the zeal of Norton convince mankind that his opinions and those of his adversary were as widely separated as infidelity and the belief of a Christian. The exegetical learning of Cambridge was upheld by Palfrey, through his works on the Old Testament; but none, except Norton, rivalled the laborious studies of Stuart and

his associates at Andover. Gannett, in a sermon entitled "Unitarian Christianity, what it is, and what is not," claimed to be its faithful representative; and accordingly Adams addressed to him a letter on his Tract on the Atonement. Of the positive creed of Unitarians, as it was elsewhere given by Gannett, the only parts which are peculiarly Christian, are these: "We believe in the divine mission of Jesus Christ, in his miracles, his perfect character, his authoritative teaching, his voluntary death and his triumphant resurrection." "We believe in the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures in respect to faith and practice." A "spiritual judgment," and "the importance of a deep and permanent change in them who lead vicious or careless lives," were also allowed and professed; and Unitarianism would bind itself to nothing more,

For something more, however, and something more kindling, the human soul would long with a desire which at times was irrepressible. The noble fruits of faith were not seen springing up beneath the dews of a doctrine so indefinite. Transcendentalism, with all its weakness and excess, was in part the effort of more thoughtful minds to breathe into their system a more inward and unworldly nature. Its writers, with a peculiar independence, described the barrenness of the public belief, and emphatically the barrenness of Unitarianism. The rural church, with its few worshippers; the slender and often diminishing company at the sacramental table; the absorbing love of wealth and of the

world, which reigned amongst the busy ; the indifference to religion and its institutions amongst the more educated ; the want of power to penetrate, and of fire to enkindle the mass ; were adduced even in testimony that the day for these forms had passed, and that religion must seek new life from the realm of transcendental truth, the resplendent sun within. At such a time, Channing was called to write on "the Power of Unitarian Christianity to produce an enlightened and fervent Piety." His light was now sinking towards the west ; and as he approached the eternal world, it seemed as if he would grasp more firmly what remained to him of the faith, and vindicate the claim of Unitarianism to those Christian honors which were menaced alike by its adversaries and its children.

Ripley, in the meantime, had withdrawn himself so far into the inner circle of speculation, that a Christian parish and pulpit could no longer satisfy or be satisfied. He retired to a kind of half cœnobite, half socialist community, which attempted to form its spiritual paradise, not in some "deep solitudes and awful cells," but in the pleasant town of Roxbury, fast by the metropolis. A bolder and more successful spirit stood there at their side, and shrunk not from the forms of the parish and the pulpit. Theodore Parker was the minister of the Second Society in Roxbury. At the ordination of Shackford at South Boston, he was the preacher ; and his theme was the Transient and the Permanent in Christianity. He feared not to reject, revile, and blaspheme whatever is supernatural in

the scriptural history; regarding the Old Testament as a pile of gorgeous pictures, the New as filled with mistaken legends and opinions which time had washed away; and Jesus Christ as only such a person as others might be and yet may be, if the divinity within them be but enough revealed. The congregation listened with awe; the elder Unitarian pastors looked one another in the face; but the earth opened not, and the ordination went on. Boston, however, was moved; the public voice demanded from Unitarianism the disavowal of results like these. But freedom and progress had been from the beginning the watchwords of the liberal party; and Parker had but advanced beyond his brethren, and uttered his thoughts with the boldest liberty. They had ever abhorred and utterly rejected the restraint of a creed; and only by a creed, however general it were, could any barrier be placed between themselves and the unabashed scorner. They had performed with him the solemn and sacred act by which a human being had been separated for the ministration of the word and sacraments; and they were fettered by their own custom of asking no questions at such a season. Some members of the ordaining council disclaimed through the press all fellowship with the doctrine of the preacher. But the lustre which surrounds the daring of unbelief at once enveloped the head of Parker; and, before a cultivated audience in Boston, he unfolded, more at length, in a succession of lectures, his sentiments on "matters pertaining to religion." The vastest charity,

the wildest indifference, could not bestow the Christian name upon his Theism ; and at length the association of the Unitarian clergy of Boston directly refused him the usual token of fellowship, admission to their pulpits. They were denounced by Parker for their honorable inconsistency ; and one of them who was employed as a minister at large, relinquished his place, because he could not acquiesce in the justice of the exclusion ; while another, who had gathered a peculiar congregation for a peculiar worship, as if men who were seeking a deeper and more spiritual life, still welcomed the martyrs of free thought to his assembly.

In 1842, a letter was addressed by Brownson to Channing as his spiritual father, in which he declared the insufficiency, for the heart and for the truth, of a religion without a mediation, and plunged, in his own manner indeed, into the depths of the ancient doctrine. It was almost the last voice which came to the ear of Channing. He visited the valleys of Berkshire, and it was at Lenox, on the anniversary of West Indian emancipation, that he spoke for the last time to an assembly of his fellow-men. As if through all his negations, a gleam from the heaven of truth had shot in at sunset, he said that "the doctrine of the Word made flesh, shows us God uniting himself most intimately with our nature, manifesting himself in a human form, for the very end of making us partakers of his own perfection." "The doctrine of grace, as it is termed," he said, "reveals the Infinite Father imparting his Holy Spirit, the best gift he can impart,

to the humblest human being who implores it." In the concluding paragraph, he uttered what, as a rhetorical apostrophe, would be almost profane, and as a prayer, would be at variance with the efforts of his life, "Come, Friend and Saviour of the race, who didst shed thy blood on the cross, to reconcile man to man, and earth to heaven!" A few days after, he died at Bennington.

In 1843, followed the death of the younger Ware and of Greenwood. These jewels that had glittered in the crown of liberal religion had mostly fallen from their places. The Bancrofts, Thayers, and Freemans of an earlier day slept with their fathers. Buckminster and Thacher passed away in their youth; Kirkland and Channing and the elder Ware, after lives of honored service. Follen perished on that fearful night, when the frozen waters of Long Island gave back the blaze of the Lexington. Holley, Greenwood, the younger Ware, names that once spoke enchantment or consolation, were now but memorials of eloquence, taste, and pastoral earnestness. The brilliant scholar, the accomplished orator, the successful statesman, the dignified chief magistrate, the ambassador whom princes and universities delighted to honor, had almost erased the recollection that Everett had once been a Unitarian pastor. Sparks had occupied his best years in raising monuments to the worthies of his country. Palfrey, too, had withdrawn from the pulpit to a secular office. Colman became a popular writer and lecturer on agriculture. After a desolating contest with an

imbittered people, Pierpont retired from the capital. Emerson had relinquished even the forms and language of Christianity. Brownson was a member of the Roman Catholic communion. Parker was a mere unbeliever. The faith of Norton seemed to embrace nothing beyond the substantial genuineness of the four gospels, as uninspired biographies of a holy man whom no prophet had foretold and no angel had attended. But Unitarian pulpits were still occupied by men of scholarship and taste; and it was not easy to find elsewhere the gorgeous diction of Dewey, or the sustained manliness and feeling of Putnam. The Christian Examiner still pursued its way, reconciling, with ability, the internal contrasts that could not be disguised; and pushing the practical efforts which somewhat balanced the former excess of negation, and gave to Unitarianism more than ever an air of religious reality.

About one hundred and thirty Unitarian congregations now existed in Massachusetts. When the few which were found in the larger towns of the neighboring States were added to these, the whole number might rise to two hundred. Of ninety-one religious assemblies in Boston, seventeen were Unitarian, four were Universalist, one was composed of Swedenborgians, and one of that sect which refuses any other name than that of Christian. In all the others, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, three persons and one God, were worshipped and glorified. The orthodox churches of the Congregational body in Boston were eleven; in

the Commonwealth, more than two hundred and fifty. But hardly twenty of the Unitarian congregations in Massachusetts were Unitarian in their origin. In all the rest, the founders and fathers had adored that very Trinity, whose Godhead the children denied.

The University at Cambridge had chiefly Unitarian professors, fellows, trustees and patrons. It was no more the high school of the Commonwealth; it had pierced the very bosom of that church which gave it life, and which so long had nourished it in the hope of filial gratitude and service. The Divinity School, which hung to it like an adopted child with the features of a stranger, was feeble and flighty; but sufficient to replenish the narrow domain of liberal Christianity with its annual refreshment. Signs were not wanting of the near or remote approach of a revolution which the will of the people could at any election of their magistrates, effect with ease; and the stately university bowed her head to more than one sect to propitiate hands which were able to strike the blow.

It was now a common saying that the doctrinal system of Unitarianism was indefinable and formless, because it prescribed no standard of agreement amongst its adherents. The besieger might batter down the common wall; but within, as at Sarragossa, every square and house could sustain the contest with its own private defences. Time, however, which levels all things, had smoothed the peculiarities of individual belief, and the outline of ideal Unitarianism, of that Unitarianism which com-

manded the assent of the liberal ministry, was not indistinctly visible. Parker had said, and said in friendship and as a Unitarian, and without reply, that it differed from the Christianity of some earlier ages, more than Mahomet from the Messiah. It was indeed, if it were viewed as a form of Christianity, a form which acknowledged itself to be without a precedent. It abhorred the doctrines of Luther and Calvin, and could hardly find common sense in five of the Thirty-nine Articles. It had no fellowship with the catholicity of the middle ages, when the centre of all rites and formularies was still a cross that had a meaning. Except in a single denial, it could as little bear the society of Arius as of Athanasius. It could not deign to seek its kindred amongst the obscurer sects of the earlier times; with Cerinthus or the Ebionites. It acknowledged no authority, and found no pleasure, in the theology of the apostolic epistles. It confided in no predictions of the prophets. It rejected the primeval history. Its honors were almost confined to the chief events in the life of Jesus, and to his discourses; and as it doubted all the narrative of his birth, the agency of angels, the existence of evil spirits, and the accuracy of the recollection of the writers wherever it could have desired that they might have erred, even this inmost oracle returned an uncertain answer. But the sole standard, the tribunal of appeal, to which the faith of the Unitarian body promised allegiance, was the record of the example and instructions of Jesus of Nazareth, so far as these had been correctly understood, remem-

bered and reported by the evangelists and their informers.

The doctrine of the Unitarian ministry affirmed that Jesus was a teacher divinely appointed ; that he wielded a control over external nature ; that, at the close of a spotless life, he sealed his mission with his blood ; and that he re-appeared on the third day after his crucifixion, as a pledge of human immortality. It affirmed no more. It denied not, indeed, all which its followers neither taught nor believed. Such of them as cared to preserve one, or another, or even a considerable mass of the ancient doctrine of the universal church, were left to their private liberty, with even more indulgence than such as denied the miracles themselves, or doubted the perfection of the character of Jesus. The one bond of union amongst the liberal teachers was the denial of a threefold distinction in the Godhead. But as a body of men, they believed neither the personal existence of the Son of God before his incarnation, nor, of course, his personal incarnation itself ; neither that the prophets had predicted a Messiah, nor, of course, that he was the predicted Messiah ; neither the fall of man through the temptation of the serpent, nor that he was that seed of the woman who was to bruise the head of the serpent. They derided the hereditary corruption of nature. They denied the necessity of a Mediator. They could not find words to utter their detestation of the thought of a Redeemer, who should be a substitute and a propitiation. They rejected every mysterious dependence of the forgiveness of sins on

the blood of the atonement. They knew of no Holy Spirit, beyond a stronger and more sustained action of the universal power which dwells in intellectual beings, and is divinity in man. They ascribed no inspiration and no decisive authority to the writers of the Old or the New Testament. They acknowledged in the sacraments no special sacredness, significance or efficacy. They smiled at the transmitted claims of any or every church and ministry. They doubted the assistance and the existence of angels; they disbelieved the hostility and the existence of devils. They relinquished the intermediate state of the soul, and the resurrection of the body. They deemed the second advent and the judgment, figures of rhetoric. They extended the grasp of cordial fellowship to the sect which declares the just and the unjust, blessed alike in death; and they expressly denied all infliction in the life to come, except such as a gracious Father may employ for the recovery of his erring children. Of all the doctrines which distinguish the Christian religion, there remained only the divine mission of Jesus. His exercise of miraculous power, and his resurrection were facts of history. About these two facts and this one doctrine men lingered, as if around two majestic columns, sustaining a broken architrave, the only fragments of some once perfect and resplendent temple. At length the spirit of improvement prompted the question, whether the ground should not be cleared, that it might be the site of a new and nobler edifice. The answer was

heard from the spade and the pickaxe of transcendental impiety.

So, through the passage of a century, doubt had struggled, and conquered, and prevailed. It began with silence on some of the more mysterious doctrines of Christianity; it ended with a denial of all its doctrines save one. It began with an appeal from human creeds to the simple language of inspiration; it ended with denying the inspiration, and discarding the language. At first, infusing itself into upright minds, with the air of scriptural inquiry, it caused a theological mistake; then, spreading the shining mist of liberality over the cold, the vain, the worldly, the timid, the presumptuous, it nourished a stupendous heresy; and finally, forcing a bolder order of thinkers back upon themselves, it issued in a wilderness of popular unbelief. But the spirit which loves to doubt can but depart, by its very nature, farther and farther from the high regions of celestial faith. He who sees the flakes of snow gathering along the tide of the humblest Alpine brook, well knows that, though kingdoms lie between, they must descend till they reach the sea.

Cornell University Library

BR530 .B95

Pages from the ecclesiastical history of



3 1924 029 254 426

olin

